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ABSTRACT

The collection of essays on the relationship between English literacy and indigenous education, particularly in the Australian context, includes: "Double Power" (Mandawuy Yunupingu); "History, Cultural Diversity & English Language Teaching" (Martin Nakata); "Scaffolding Reading and Writing for Indigenous Children in School" (David Rose, Brian Gray, Wendy Cowey); "Literacy Teaching and Learning in a Bilingual Classroom" (Colleen Bowman, Lily Pascoe, Trish Joy); "Rough Diamonds: A Case Study of Workplace Literacy & Training for Indigenous Workers in the Mining Industry" (Peter Wignell); and "Digging Deeper: Using Text Analysis To Develop the English Literacy of Indigenous Students" (Patricia Beattie). (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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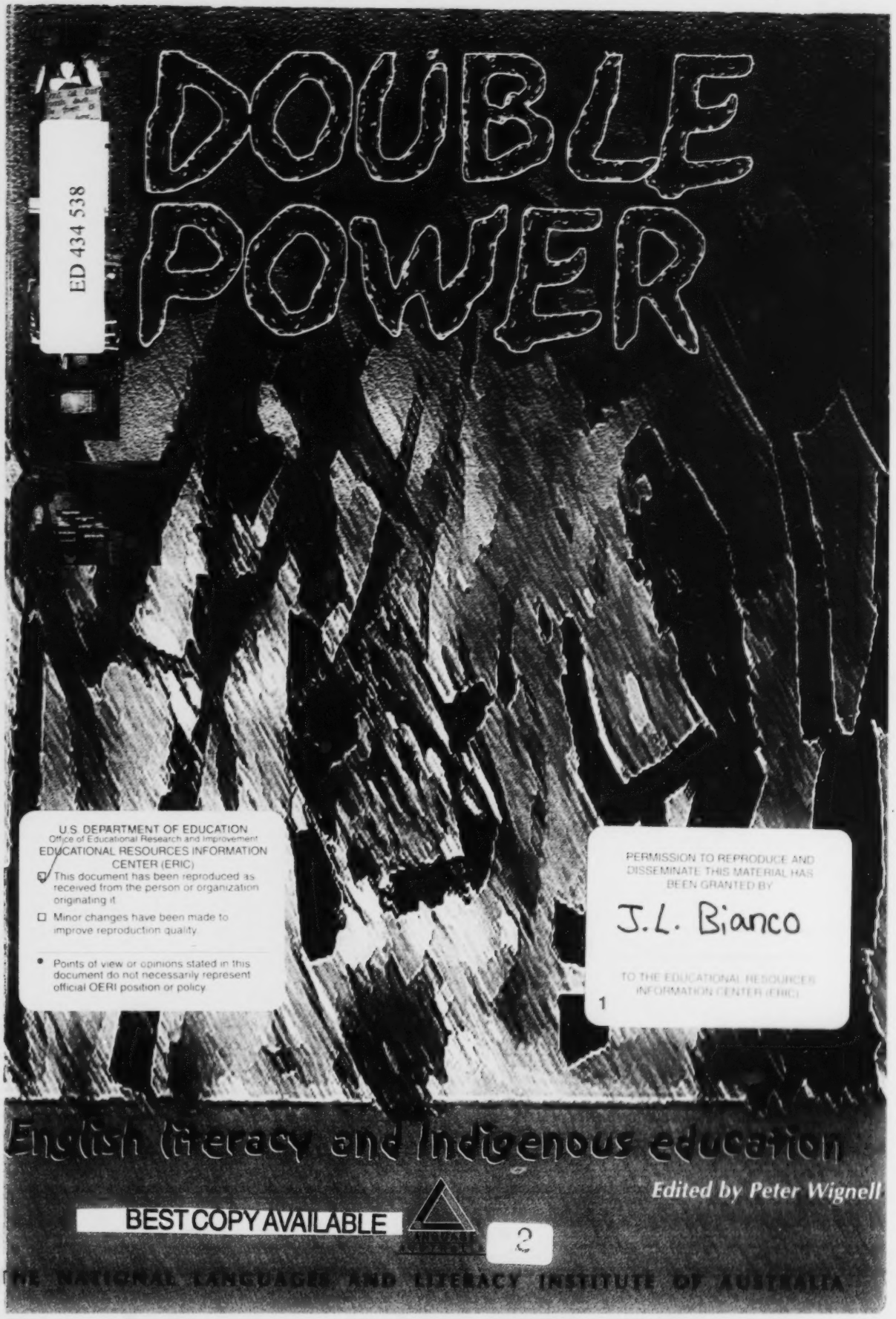
DOUBLE POWER
English literacy and Indigenous education
Edited by Peter Wignell
THE NATIONAL LANGUAGES AND LITERACY INSTITUTE OF AUSTRALIA

ED 434 538

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DOUBLE POWER:
English literacy and Indigenous education

Editor: Peter Wignell,
Centre for the Study of Language in Education,
Northern Territory University

Language Australia
Melbourne
1999

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and
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Introduction

I'll keep this introduction short and to the point because I don't want to give too much of the content of this book away by telling other people's stories for them. The title of this book, Double Power, comes from the words of Mandawuy Yunupingu in describing his personal experience of becoming a person who is literate across two cultures. Mandawuy Yunupingu argues persuasively that being literate in English has added to the resources he has at his disposal in negotiating with the dominant culture.

What I have tried to do in this book is put together a collection of articles which address both the practical and political aspects of literacy in English and Indigenous Australians. On the practical side, the books includes case studies from a number of contexts. These contexts vary in both their circumstances and their locations. They include adult workplace literacy (Western Australia), literacy for adults in tertiary education (Northern Territory) and primary and secondary schooling (Arnhem Land and Central Australia). All of these articles are written by practitioners with experience in the field and all of them document actual practice.

On the political side, because of the often contentious and sometimes acrimonious debates which happen around the issue of literacy in English, I have left it to two Indigenous contributors to state their positions. Mandawuy Yunupingu, from North East Arnhem Land writes of his experiences in becoming literate across two cultures. Martin Nakata, a Torres Strait Islander, presents an impassioned case for English literacy in schools in the Torres Straits Islands. I will not summarise or paraphrase these articles, instead I will let them speak for themselves.

Of the case-study oriented articles, Brian Gray's, David Rose's and Wendy Cowey's chapter both presents a case for and exemplifies in detail a pedagogic model for teaching literacy in schools. The chapter focuses on teaching primary and secondary school Aboriginal children from Central Australia. The other school

oriented chapter documents the work and experiences of two teachers, Colleen Bowman and Lily Pascoe, and a teacher mentor, Trish Joy, and their primary age class in Maningrida, in Arnhem Land. This chapter highlights co-operative teaching between an Aboriginal teacher and a non-Aboriginal teacher and the innovative approaches they implement, especially the use of the Internet in literacy teaching.

The other chapters focus on adult contexts. Peter Wignell's chapter documents his work in developing worplace literacy training materials for Aboriginal workers at a mine site in the Kimberley region of north west Western Australia. Patricia Beattie's chapter is about working with Indigenous students from remote communities who are undertaking tertiary education courses at Batchelor College in the Northern Territory.

CHAPTER 1

Double Power

Mandawuy Yunupingu
Yirrkala, Arnhem Land

What I'm writing about here is, on the surface, my experience of becoming an educated, literate person in and across two cultures, Yolngu and Balanda*. (*Balanda is a term used in the Top End of the Northern Territory to refer to non-Aboriginal people.)

On another level, however, I want to use my story as an example of what I call 'double power'. By 'double power' I mean the power to operate in and negotiate between two cultures, in my case Yolngu and Balanda.

First I'm going to talk about how things are now for me. Then I'm going to talk about some of my life history to show how things got to be the way they are now for me. Finally I'm going to offer some suggestions and possibilities for the future.

My experience as part of Yothu Yindi illustrates the meaning of 'double power'. In Yothu Yindi we bring together music, ceremony, lyrics and technology from two cultural traditions into a fusion which produces something new and different. Different threads are woven together and then put out into the world as a finished product that is something new and different. I guess you could say that what we are doing is a kind of multi-literacy, or multi media and multicultural literacy. I see this as a positive thing, not putting two cultures up against each other but bringing them together.

However, the kinds of things we are trying to achieve with Yothu Yindi are a long way from where I started. Where I am today is the result of a long journey.

How did I get here where I am now? Before I tell my story I want to put out a few questions and, while I tell my story, I want you to think about what I say in relation to these questions. These questions are:

- When am I literate?
- How am I literate?

- Why am I literate?

and

- Who decides if I am literate or not?

I grew up in critical times. It was a time of transition, with contemporary culture as well as traditional culture being accepted by my people. In this time of change my people wanted to keep control of their destiny. We needed to be the ones who made the decisions.

To keep control of our destiny required a shift in thinking. It involved both acceptance and resistance. We had to take account of Western ideas, both positive ones and negative ones and accept the ones that would help us strengthen our culture.

My education started off as traditional learning. From when I was a baby until I first went to school I had a traditional upbringing. I learned from my mother, my relations, by being with people and doing things with them.

My traditional learning didn't stop when I started Western schooling in a mission school. I've kept up my traditional learning for my whole life. Going to school was, however, an interesting time for me. I was learning something foreign that I was intrigued by. This made me want to learn more about this foreign culture that I was curious about. Please note that the key word here is about. I wanted to learn ABOUT them, not become one of them.

This was difficult in the assimilationist climate of that time. It was difficult to learn about Western things without feeling pressure to act like a Balanda. From the system's point of view, Western learning meant teaching us to be like them. In the mission school, becoming literate meant becoming 'white': doing Balanda things in Balanda ways.

It was a big challenge to learn about Balanda ways without feeling like I was becoming like them: without becoming assimilated.

Then, in the early 1970s, I did my initial teacher training at Batchelor College. Batchelor College was different then from how it is now. In those days, learning to be a teacher meant learning to be like a Balanda classroom teacher. It was still an assimilationist model.

From there I went out as a teacher to Yirrkala (in north east Arnhem Land) school. Again, in those days, the school was run by the Balanda system. All the decisions to do with the school were made by the Balanda administration. Success and ability were measured by Balanda in Balanda ways. Being a Black teacher in a Balanda run school meant, more or less, being a Balanda teacher with a black face.

Things started to change when I went on to further training in the Deakin, Batchelor Aboriginal Teacher Education program (DBATE for short) in the mid 1980s. Here I had my first experience of western education that wasn't assimilationist. The program here formally recognised two knowledge traditions and tried to make Indigenous knowledge, which had become invisible, visible again.

Deakin's attitude appealed to me, particularly their action research, case study

approach, which opened up for me at that time different angles on education and freedom of education. Even then, this wasn't without problems. I'll just digress a little and tell a little story about one essay I wrote.

I wrote one essay in Gumatj, my own language. I did this for three reasons. I wanted to pinpoint the area of language, to show how deep my thinking could be in my own language. I felt that I couldn't get across the ideas that I wanted to express if I had to do it in English without losing most of the meaning. I could have translated it into English words but I would have been left with just the words, the meaning I could make in my own language would have been lost.

At the same time I wanted to put my Balanda educators in the position that Aboriginal kids going to Balanda schools for the first time were in, being confronted with a language they couldn't understand. I also wanted to have a bit of a dig at the Balanda to see what they made of it and to make the point that nobody there was competent to assess it.

They were a bit shocked because they couldn't respond. They didn't know the language and they were locked into a philosophical position of accepting Indigenous knowledge. They ended up accepting a short English summary and I passed.

This period of my education came at the same time as the struggle in Yirrkala for control of the school. It also coincided with a shift in direction for me from being a student into educational leadership. This shift also taught me that issues to do with curriculum, teaching, learning and literacy are all about power.

My time in the D-BATE program coincided with a struggle for control of Yirrkala school. I happened to be in the right place at the right time. We wanted the school to be a place which put together Balanda and Yolngu learning to strengthen our culture.

To do this at Yirrkala school we had to invent a governance structure that allowed us to explore alternative visions of what it means to be educated and literate. We needed to create the space for us to allow us to express ourselves and we had to overcome the structural and organisational barriers which had been, up until then, a feature of Western education. This became a collaborative project between community and clan.

We developed a vision and a five year plan, called an Aboriginalisation Program, which was accepted by the Northern Territory government in 1986. My involvement in developing this plan is an example of 'double power'. I worked with the elders, writing down their ideas. I then negotiated the elders' ideas into a form that the Western education system could understand. To negotiate what we wanted we had to be able to put our ideas their way. To do that you need 'double power'.

The basics of the plan we came up with were:

- A school council/action group was to manage the day to day running of the school. This group, of which the principal was a member, was to make decisions on behalf of the principal. In this way the community became more directly involved in running the school. This same model still operates today.

- A system of mentor training was introduced, with Aboriginal teachers working side by side with Balanda, with equal pay. The relationship is one of partnership. This was the start of the mentor system which still continues.
- Curriculum became more Aboriginal. Our language became a valued part of teaching and learning. Classroom practice and management became more Aboriginal and an Aboriginal oriented curriculum was introduced. For example, students spent a lot of time out of the classroom on field studies.

As a result of these changes kids started to look on school as a positive place to be. We found that we were getting both better attendance and better results. In fact, my own girls go to Yirrkala school and, as a parent, I'm happy with their results, especially in English and maths. Compared to myself, they're way ahead of where I was at the same age. Hopefully their road will be easier than mine was.

I left the school in 1991 and have been with Yothu Yindi full time since then. That takes us up to where we are now.

Although I went through the system, I'm not a product of the system in the sense that I didn't turn out the way the system wanted me to turn out. In a lot of ways I feel that I was fortunate in being in the right place at the right time and have been in positions where I had opportunities to challenge how things were and be involved in doing something about it by bringing together traditional and Balanda training and learning into 'double power' to get things done.

For me, getting things done, putting ideas and visions into practice would not have been possible without literacy in English. I believe that it is necessary to be able to negotiate with Balanda in the language of power but to struggle and succeed you need 'double power': the double power of the Yolngu and the Balanda way.

I'd like to finish talking on a positive note and say that double power is not only about struggle, it also opens up exciting possibilities for new ways of expressing and new ways of knowing, and for reconciliation.

CHAPTER 2

History, Cultural Diversity & English Language Teaching

Martin Nakata
Aboriginal Research Institute, University of South Australia

Introduction

In this chapter I write about Cultural Diversity and the Teaching of English to Indigenous people. But before I start let me say this: I am not a teacher of English. I am not a school teacher of English.

I have been, however, a student of English. I am a parent of school children, a researcher of literacy and pedagogy, and a Torres Strait Islander who has for a long time been advocating a more focused and urgent pursuit of English education in the Torres Straits.

In these roles, as both scholar and researcher, I have been called to task many times over my advocacy of the teaching of English.

My position tends to be questioned mostly by educators, researchers, colleagues, linguists, and other practitioners. Most of these critics are not Islanders, but I also occasionally get the same line from some Indigenous people.

The line of questioning goes something like this:

- Who am I? (Hell, I don't know!)
- Who do I speak for?
- How authentic is my voice?
- And, what do I really know about the issues?

These questions are generally posited in accusations like:

- You no longer reside in the Torres Strait Islands!
  (Well, some of us had to leave our homes to find work.)
- Where is your classroom experience?
- Perhaps your views are just your own, rooted in your personal history and not shared by others in the Straits.

It seems to me that many people in the field find it hard to understand why we call for English, and find it hard to accept that we want English education.

To understand why I, and other Torres Strait Islanders, continue to call for English education requires an understanding of our history.

So, first I thought that I would provide a brief account of our historical position to try and show that the arguments for English education in the Torres Straits are valid, have been pursued for more than a century, and are currently at risk from those who would argue that the teaching of English undermines traditional language and culture, and that English has relevance only for those Islanders who wish to pursue a life outside the Straits, or for those in the sector of the marketplace that requires a higher education.

I want to emphasise at the outset that, though I will be having a 'go' at the 'cultural agenda' here, it is only because of its primacy in educational circles and because of the complacent attitude that culture is all that is needed to address the wide range of issues and problems Torres Strait Islanders face in formal schooling. In no way am I wanting to suggest that we should abandon the cultural agenda. What I want to get across today is that it would work more powerfully alongside a more focused approach to English language teaching.

There is not a prescriptive answer. There will be no ABCs to a quick fix. In the complex area of Indigenous education, language learning, and teaching, there is no longer room for such measures. But let me make this appeal to you all: it would take everyone of us working systematically as well as progressively, putting in huge efforts, at a collaborative level; and, in the very beginning of such a project it would require that we all take a long hard look at what we have been doing in Indigenous education thus far.

The History

So, what is the history of Islanders' call for education in English?

The Torres Strait Islanders have always been traders (McCarthy, 1938) and travellers (Haddon, 1904) looking outward to the north that is Papua New Guinea and the south that is Australia, as well as being on guard against any unwelcome intruders.

When the London Missionary Society arrived in the Torres Straits in 1871 they were intending to use the Straits as a stepping stone to evangelise Papua New Guinea (McFarlane, 1888). Thus, the education of Islanders to spread 'the gospel' was an integral part of the missionary project.

The pastors of the Mission believed that to be a Christian was to 'live a certain way of life', and so they systematically set about reorganising Islander ways of life, mostly with consent and persuasion but also with some brutal sanctions for those who infringed the new codes of conduct (Beckett, 1987). To live the civilised life necessitated having at least some of the commodities of civilisation (McFarlane,

1888). For example, Islanders now needed clothes to cover 'naked' bodies, soap to clean them, iron for making tools for more 'productive labour', as well as cash to purchase these things, and so on, and so forth.

Thus Islanders were propelled upon a path that required both a certain level of literacy and the pursuit of material possessions.

These two things were to be got from participation in the education process and through our labour in commercial activity. We were, believe it or not, almost continuously self-supporting until the 1960s (Bleakley, 1961).

The missionaries achieved the physical reorganisation remarkably quickly.

By the time there was a settled government presence on Thursday Island in 1877, they held considerable sway over a number of Islands. By 1879, the annexation of the Islands to Queensland was complete and within a year, the government magistrate appointed Mamooses or headmen to represent him on the islands, and laws and police officers were formally instituted (Bleakley, 1961; Beckett, 1987). Why? Because there was a booming pearling industry in the islands at the time and the Queensland government had to legislate to have some control over the economic activities and the profits. You see, by 1885 the marine industry was making £94,000 per year, and by 1891 this had increased to £126,000 per year (Foley, 1982). You can gain some idea of the size of the industry if you consider that by the end of the century Islanders were paid at the rate of £2 per month.

Thus Islanders remained on their Islands, reorganised and regulated first by missionaries and their codes of behaviour and then in the secular sense, less than 10 years later, by government agents.

As the cornerstone of the missionary project, the missionaries founded the Papuan Institute on Murray Island and began taking willing Islanders from all over the Straits. This Institute consisted of an industrial school which taught boat building, forging and other building skills, and a seminary. Before entering the seminary, the boys had to read and write 'tolerably well', and know the elements of arithmetic (McFarlane, 1888; Langbridge, 1977).

At the same time, alongside the Churches on various islands, schools were established for the children and attended by many adults who wished to learn to read and write.

John Douglas, an enlightened government magistrate appointed to the region, and a former Premier of Queensland, made this statement to the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, Queensland, January 17, 1900:

"They are a growing and intelligent people and they want to be educated... They show an inclination for education which often exceeds that of our own white population... The people are very anxious that their children should learn English, and they desire them to learn English because they know their prospects will be materially assisted by their knowledge of English." (Douglas, 1899-1900, p. 35)

To this end he began the process of appointing government teacher-administrators to as many Islands as he could (Beckett, 1987).

But some of the general literature also show that two communities pursued education independent of the missions and government initiative. On Masig Island, and before the Annexation of the islands to the state of Queensland, Mosby had already hired and paid for the services of a teacher on that Island. Right up until the post-War era, Masig Islanders set the leaving age at 16 years, two years longer than the state leaving age of 14 (Raven-Hart, 1949).

As well, on Naghir Island, James Mills, my great grandfather, built and paid for a school in 1904 and was to accommodate children from surrounding islands as well – his only request of the government being to supply a qualified teacher. When the number of pupils fell to a level which did not justify a government teacher, he hired his own teacher to teach the children on his island.

The historical records show some Islanders before and at the turn of the century responding to the provision of education, some actively engaging in the pursuit of education, and some of them managing their finances well enough to contribute towards its provision.

However, with the death of the liberal Government Magistrate, John Douglas, the Islanders moved into a new phase of their history, they came to live under the 'The Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897'.

Although not moved off their land as Aborigines in Queensland were, and although families were not separated, the terms and the conditions of the Act were the same.

For Islanders, this period of Protection, from 1904 until 1971, included complete control over their movements, and it meant complete control of their finances, their wages, their employment, and their labour as well as their communications, both within the Straits and outside (Bleakley, 1961; Beckett, 1987; Campbell, Cameron, Keats, Poulter & Poulter, 1958). As well, it brought increased regulation of Islanders' daily lives.

Already morally regulated by the Church to a degree unknown in the general community, Islanders now found themselves legally and economically regulated with equal zeal.

Nonetheless, highly motivated Islanders with plenty of initiative, independence, and ability were still able to prosper economically from the marine industry (Beckett, 1987).

But how frustrating to be working hard, to be earning well even on the reduced wages to which they were only entitled, but then to find that this money was not theirs to do with as they wished. Not only was their money not available to them but the pearling boats purchased on loan from the government were not theirs to do with as they wished, even when paid for in full. Even, mind you, when the money for the loans came from a fund that came from deductions to their salary, and the profits of their labour. Loans were generally paid for quickly, a combination of good pearling prices and Islanders desire to be in control of their own boats (Beckett, 1987).

Encouraged and oftentimes forced to support their communities, Islanders were at the same time restricted in terms of what they could purchase (Beckett, 1987).

Government policy was more about self-support than it was about raising living standards (Bleakley. 1961). Without access to their considerable savings, Islanders were forced to live in poor conditions.

State Policy also stated that Islanders were to be educated only for village life (Bleakley, 1961). Thus schooling did not proceed past the year 3 or 4 mark, and post-school training was along practical lines, trades, teaching, clerical and administration but never to a satisfactory standard.

Frustration and discontent culminated in a widely reported labour strike in 1936 (Bleakley, 1961; Beckett, 1987). Islanders' first demand was for proper education. This was not forthcoming, though Islanders were temporarily pacified with some concessions.

Despite all this discontent, it is hard to find any official documentation of Islander grievances. One has to rely on memories of Islanders as recorded in a couple of academic theses (Beckett, 1964; Langbridge, 1977) or the journalistic accounts (Raven-Hart, 1949; Imms, 1961; Staff, 1972) of visitors to the Torres Straits.

As romantic and patronising as some of this journalism is, some of it does include the voices of discontented Islanders. And the fact that most of it is post-war, points up the ongoing discontent despite the resolution of the labour strike of 1936.

Apart from the control of labour, money, and the control of consumer goods, it was the discrimination that occurred as a result of various rules that existed for Islanders and not for whites, that fuelled Islander resentment.

There were many irksome accepted practices that were not written legal rules that set Islanders apart from and below whites. These could have been contested if the administrative order was not so all encompassing of daily lives. These could have been contested if Islanders had known what was a legal restriction and what was accepted practice on the part of overzealous officials.

For example, by law, entry to State schools could not be denied on the basis of race or religion. But, the practice of maintaining separate schools for coloured children and Islanders in general, kept up because of the protests from white parents rather than the law.

Islanders thus continued to be subjected to a different standard of English.

The second World War, and the threat of Japanese invasion from the North, brought about the evacuation of the islands of everyone, except the Islanders. It brought the marine industry to a halt. It brought a military garrison to the area. And in doing so, and in accepting Islander volunteers for the defence of the area it opened up the outside world to the Islanders in a way that had never been possible under the administration of the Queensland government.

It introduced the Commonwealth government to Islanders as a higher authority than the State. What happened in many parts of the colonised world at this time in history, also happened here. The Islanders were exposed to the discourse of freedom, that is the propaganda ideology that solicited a concerted effort from the Australian population to defend and fight for certain principles of freedom (Beckett, 1987).

In giving service and loyalty to King and country, the Islanders assumed that they were in fact fighting for their entitlement to be free. In their wartime service, they were exposed to the friendship of white soldiers and learned considerably about their position in relation to other Australians. They learned that they were not equal citizens. They learned that they were not materially or educationally anywhere near the standards of white Australians. They learned that they did not receive equal pay (Beckett, 1987).

A couple of small protests were staged but even more notably, they began to argue their case through the discourse of citizenship and equal rights, and freedom. They were led to believe that after the war everything would change and their frustration would be over. But this was not to be, although they made quite specific demands, including 'proper' schools, secondary education, equal pay, control over their finances, freedom of movement, and the vote. In essence, they were calling for an end to the 'Aboriginal Protection Act' (Beckett, 1987).

After the War however, Islanders went straight back under the Act and though it was never enforced as stringently as in pre-War times, it was administered until 1971. It is in this post-war period that we see the big Catch 22 for Islanders.

The cry for citizenship which went up in the Straits, and indeed all around the colonised world, was met in the Torres Straits with a response from the government of caution and pacification:

'Were Islanders with their low levels of education ready for the entitlements of citizenship or, should they wait until they were in a better position to understand the full responsibilities that went with citizenship?'

The cry for freedom was quelled with such statements until even the most radical communities acquiesced by conceding they were not ready for the responsibility. The most radical demand was once again for higher levels of education. There was never again mass political action.

Those Islanders who were closest to the government were usually the most successful and the least discontented. But in private discourse between Islanders, the dream of freedom remained alive:

"They say we can't get freedom till we better educated. But that same talk since before the war. When my father was Councillor they ask more education. How long we been ask that thing and never got it yet? Torres Strait people never will get education while they under the Act. While we under the Act we'll always be down" (Beckett, 1987, 104-5).

Nevertheless, with the emergence of Human Rights discourse in the international arena, outside forces began to exert an influence on Commonwealth and State Governments. Islanders began to associate the Commonwealth Government with freedom and the State Government with control and oppression. By the time Whitlam was Prime Minister, Islanders were well placed to wield considerable political leverage by playing off the two governments as it suited their purpose (Beckett, 1987).

For me, then, the history of our struggle to mediate the effects of administrative

control, is reflected in the history of our calls for education and English.

You see, even when faced with discontent, dissatisfaction, scepticism about official explanations of these controls, and ongoing frustration about their position, Islanders continued to pursue education as the means for meeting their desire for control. When grievances could not be accommodated by the administration, and when concessions never fully satisfied Islanders, their response was always to renew their calls for a better education.

What were the Islanders doing?

So, what does this history tell us about what Islanders were doing?

Missionaries, pearlers, and colonial administrators effected a rupture that could not and cannot be undone. Islanders have embraced, changed... been sceptical, angry, frustrated, suspicious, pleased, inspired, grateful... have resisted... been motivated... and been disillusioned by it all. But we have never retreated from change.

We responded.

We responded and engaged intelligently, and in our own way, albeit from within the administrative constraints of religious and secular agendas. As change rolls through our lives, Islander custom changes and adjusts, but Islanders make it what it is. We have been isolated but we have been outward and forward looking.

Through individual and collective persistence we have migrated to the mainland in the pursuit of equal living standards and better education without waiting for the Act to be abolished, without waiting for conditions in the islands to improve.

We have experienced change and somehow realised that to mediate the effects of that change required us to pursue English education.

Whether we were on the right track is not the point. The point is, you see, we were actively engaged in a political way, within the very real constraints of the colonial order. There was nothing we could do, so well controlled were we, but we engaged, and still continue to do so.

We were not occupied with keeping things the same, but we were occupied with increasing our capacity to mediate and control outside forces and improve the conditions of our lives. In the face of constant denial of more freedom, we pursued education as a means to earning the rights of entitlement.

Islander history is one of being outward looking, of being progressive, of embracing change, of struggling to have some control of those changes.

We have evolved a strong and vibrant Islander custom which has arisen from the ashes of precontact culture, and which continues to centre our meaning-making system around traditional forms whilst articulating ourselves at the same time to the external forms of capitalism for our own material benefit.

That's an intelligent response, isn't it?

It's what most cultures have been engaged in – moving with the times.

There is nothing wrong with us.

There is nothing wrong with wanting an English education that will deliver us the knowledge and material standards of other Australians.

And there is certainly nothing wrong about wanting an education that will enable us to negotiate our position in relation to the emerging global agenda.

The removal of Protection laws

So, what has happened since the removal of Protection laws and official acceptance of the need for improvements in education?

I don't have the time to go into the details of the last 20 years except to say this. By the end of the sixties we see the demise of the pearling industry, the entry of the Commonwealth as a quasi-administrator, and the growth of the welfare sector. The long and short of it is that Islanders are still well contained within the linear descendant of the colonial order (Beckett, 1987).

The content of our regulation may have changed but the old apparatuses have been merely retooled for the new tasks, and the new politics requires processes of consultation and negotiation with the communities.

As our autonomy grows, we continue to articulate the same old dynamics through what are increasingly becoming Islander and Aboriginal institutions. Pragmatic politics likewise also requires us to follow the politics of cultural difference, an agenda which has arisen out of the Human Rights discourse.

Thus one hundred years down the track, in the 1970's, at a time when Islanders were legitimately able to move freely, to migrate to the mainland to find the work that would pay them enough to live to the standards that whites were allowed, when at last secondary education was becoming available to them, when they had the vote and could control their own money, it is ironic and most frustrating that the very education system that they had tried so long and hard to access should fail them, and continue to condemn them to lower outcomes than the rest of the Australian population (Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force, 1988; Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1989).

And it is so frustrating that during a period when funds have been forthcoming (and they might not be for much longer), Islanders are being educated to accept that English may not be what they need after all. Because for these past twenty years the priority for educational reform in the Torres Straits has been that of acknowledging and incorporating cultural difference (Orr & Williamson, 1973; Orr, 1977; Orr, 1979; Boxall & Duncan, 1979; Osborne, 1979; Cunnington, 1984).

For Islanders who had been the recipients of a pedagogy that did not even recognise them as second language learners and that did not make any allowance for their cultural context in curriculum, this shift held a promise of better and more effective education.

But this premise arises not out of our historical position, but out of the discourses of Human Rights and the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, history and linguistics.

And whilst it has provided a positive force, it has also undermined the position of Islanders who have long called for English education.

In the Straits, and in the educational field, many would argue that the changes of these last twenty years have led to improvements in outcomes.

It is, however, difficult to argue that the teaching of English in the Torres Straits has improved significantly, when recent surveys show that a significant proportion of students in the high school are still emergent readers, that people in the workplace struggle to do the written components of their jobs, and still require supervision by Outsiders, and when tertiary students continue to struggle with basic reading and writing and are thus unable to engage fully with the content of their courses, and in many instances fail to complete them.

And I can't tell you, in the face of this historical struggle, how angry it continues to make me when I stand up in the pursuit of English education, and liberal experts question me as to what I know about the Torres Straits and about the teaching of English.

And, perhaps most frustrating of all, is the fact that it is out of the Human Rights discourse that legitimated our status as humans, rather than as mentally inferior savages, that these people are able to formulate their questions of me.

I recently picked up a report into the conditions of Aboriginal and Islander lives that was commissioned by the United Nations Association of Queensland in 1958 (Campbell, et al., 1958), and there in black and white are four principles that have had so much importance to our progress.

These are:

- the granting of full citizenship status and elimination of racial discrimination;
- the provision of assistance to raise living standards to that of white citizens;
- the development of self-reliance and self-advance by the coloured people; and,
- the preservation and promotion of valuable aspects of the native culture for the benefit of the coloured people and ultimately all.

(Source: Campbell, Cameron, Keats, Poulter & Poulter, 1958, p. 52)

For Indigenous Australians, these are perhaps the four most important principles to enter public discourse because they have legitimated our status as humans, our right to freedom, our ongoing entitlement to equal participation, and acknowledgment and respect for our cultural values.

These very important and powerful strands permeate the current National Policy on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education (Department of Employment, Education & Training, 1989); and rightly so. But, as well, out of these arise the taken for granted assumptions of liberal experts as to what is best for Islanders in education and they relate principally from the last, that of cultural preservation and promotion.

The acknowledgment of cultural difference

So, what has happened to the call for English since the acknowledgment of cultural difference?

Now the very important point that I want to make about cultural preservation and promotion is that, in itself, it is not the problem.

Nor is it the Human Rights discourse which continues to be one of our strongest calling cards in the ongoing battle for social justice.

I think it is:

- the over-popularisation of principles;
- the uptake of them into our commonsense knowledge;
- their power as an explanation of failure;
- their ultimate implementation into a range of programs; and,
- their incorporation into our commonsense logic of simplistically looking at problems and solutions as cases of black versus white, of us and them.

But the most damaging aspect of the principle of culture preservation and promotion – and I've said this in other places, and I continue to say it because it continues to be the case – is that it has not only become a panacea for all our ills but has also become so regulatory that it precludes Islanders such as myself and Indigenous people all over this country from pursuing the issues that we want to pursue.

The cultural agenda precludes us from asking the difficult questions about our participation in the broader Australian community, because according to this simplistic logic, we can be held accountable for being on the wrong side of the ideological fence and outargued by the more articulate community of seasoned academics, experts, as well as practitioners.

In these situations, the hard questions cannot even get off the ground. Not when Outside experts are sitting with Islander teachers in meetings feeding them questions to undermine the position of people such as myself who might be challenging their position (incident at Language Policy Conference, 29 March, 1996).

The hard questions that I try to raise are themselves called into question, and are derailed before the discussion can begin. I can't call for English they say because its assimilationist.

Who says so? Why must this be?

Doesn't it depend on what the goal is?

I can't call for English because it will destroy our own languages?

Who says so? Why must this be?

Can't they coexist?

When we call for English literacy, we are told we need literacy in both English and our first language. Why do we need to 'read' and 'write' in our mother tongue first which is after all, still a robust oral tradition?

Because it works in French Canada that's why!

If I can be convinced too, I will accept it.

But what of other possibilities?

Why is it that learning English at school cancels out children's previously acquired and ongoing acquisition of their first language competencies and communicative patterns? Who says so?

Why is this assumed when the history shows forward and outward looking Islanders successfully domesticating outside forms and practices into their own meaning-making systems?

What about harnessing the Torres Strait Creole in the teaching process as an oral aid (as being attempted in the Bamaga Primary School)? Why take the time to teach how to read and write it when it is a vibrant changing oral language?

The questions haven't begun to be discussed, because I can't even ask them without being undermined by outside experts who supposedly know better.

I hear this talk about acknowledging our cultural capital, and some Islanders demand it.

But what is it?

What value does it have when, in these times, our material well-being and our political strength depend on how successfully we articulate ourselves in national and global markets?

Tell me, please?

Oh I know, it's what makes me who I am, and what makes me feel good about myself.

I'll tell you what makes me feel good:

- Conversing with people and being able to follow their conversation, being able to join in, not feeling foolish and ignorant,
- watching my child receive awards for being the highest academic achiever in her school,
- knowing that my children have a future,
- being able to discuss my health with doctors,
- being able to argue with Telecom about my phone bill.

We talk what we know, and for years all I could talk about was fishing and Island-way-of-life. I extended the knowledge of many a white person about fishing and hunting.

But what did it do for me? If I can't read about the world then I can't speak about the world. If I can't speak about the world then how am I to understand my position, or hold my position, or negotiate my position, or change my position in the face of others.

My cultural capital has value primarily in my own community and of course, to curious Outsiders and their cameras. And where is my community going, where is it headed, pray tell, if most of its members cannot read about the world, cannot understand the content of political legislations that affect them, or even general news items on the Box?

We already have less than a handful of people with the skills to negotiate politically, only a handful, and in them we place our faith.

I think I'm being conned by such talk. I'm as sceptical of it as my forbears were of a government who said they controlled our money for our benefit.

So how is a teacher who knows nothing about my language, or my history, or my community, or my predicament, going to come in and harness my cultural capital? Indeed, I'd like to see what cultural capital looks like in an English Teacher's classroom?

Frankly, I'm beginning to feel the same way about identity. I'm sick to death of people telling me my language is my identity... my culture is my identity.

If you read the history I have just shared with you, you would understand that Islander identity is also very much a product of colonial rule, in part derived from our response to colonial rule.

Our identity has everything to do with our political struggle and yes, holding onto our languages and holding onto our cultures is a part of that struggle but I don't think they are the only defining elements of our identity which is how I hear it being presented at conferences for Indigenous peoples.

Visible public statements about our cultural identity hold more importance and significance for many Islanders than individual and personal desires to maintain all aspects of culture and tradition in the private domain. These visible public statements are about our group identity, an identity historically forged for political purposes, in the face of outside control.

It is not just 'the essence' of our culture that is so intrinsic to us you see but it is also our capacity to form and reform it as the contexts of our lives change.

The people who question me about this - are they worrying about their identity? No! They're usually fully accessing the global culture successfully as well as gaining benefits for themselves. They know all about everything... including what's best for me.

And lack of self-esteem. Well, I never want to hear the phrase again. Islanders actually have an over-abundance of self-esteem. We think we are really a great bunch of people.

What is it about the uptake of the cultural agenda that has us so scared of being who we are today and saying what we think and believe? Why are we called upon to be so homogenous and preserved, nobody else is?

Why can't I ask questions without being asked whether I'm an Islander or not?

The teaching of English

So, what does the history of Islanders and Islander aspirations have to do with ESL teachers?

Well, of all the people that I don't like to get angry with are the practitioners who work at the coal face doing the best they can, and always being told that they are getting it wrong.

Trust me, I know how that feels.

I can't presume to offer advice to ESL teachers because I know next to nothing about ESL teaching except for being one of your clients of course. But what I guess I wanted to say to you is this:

- There is a history to everything.
- Indigenous people have a history that has never been properly told.
- Islanders have a history that has never been properly told.
- And part of Islander history is the struggle for equality, and part is for control over our lives and within that lies our pursuit of English education.

I think it would be helpful to Islanders that one of the premises for the teaching of English be that the primary principle of its incorporation into our lives is as a political tool. If this could be the premise then the teaching of it might have to gear up with a sense of urgency to the task of equipping Islanders with English skills to fully participate in their own history.

I suspect, in fact, I know, that the teaching of English is geared down, down to functional purposes, because that is all we are seen to need it for, and the arguments for teaching of traditional languages are in ascendancy because linguists and anthropologists tell us we won't have an identity without it.

To me, the argument for teaching traditional languages is equally valid but separate from the issue of teaching English, and the pursuit of it should not be used to undermine the arguments for teaching English.

I think that understanding the historical call for English might help proponents of bilingualism to really think about all possibilities in trying to meet Islanders need for English, or at the very least to not override the urgency of effective English teaching.

I have heard the criticism that ESL tends towards functional literacy and I can't make a judgement on that but I did read a piece of research (Osborne & Dawes, n.d.) of an ESL secondary class in the Torres Straits where the kids were practising over-the-counter transactions which involved giving information about themselves.

I think that people can communicate details such as name, address, age, etc., without needing role play lessons in the secondary school to help them.

Don't you?

I think we should be looking over that counter, figuratively and seeking the information that the people behind it have rather than learning how to give information.

If we were geared up politically, we might be able to teach the more complex

language that's needed to access the content of disciplines or to follow the intricacies of reasoned argument.

One Islander male I know, all 120 kgs of him, was frustrated because he couldn't read well enough to understand current affairs. So, he enrolled in an adult literacy course at the local TAFE to improve his English and found himself being shown how to fill out bank forms. As he remarked to me:

"If I can't fill out my bank forms, I can ask at enquiries."

"What I want to know is, if it is banking that interests me then shouldn't they be teaching me English well enough to understand more about finances in general and money in particular, you know, what happens behind the scenes, in the bank?" (Interview with JN, 1992)

You see, it is knowledge that Islander people want and need. If we had the political knowledge of Western institutions, their systems, and their practices, we would know what questions to ask. Instead, there is seemingly a tendency to downgrade to lessons in how to respond to questions – questions that will give others the information they need so that they can continue to be in control of our lives.

I think that this kind of practice diverts us from access to more complex language competencies and the knowledges that they would bring.

In regard to the Torres Strait context, the questions I would ask are these:

- Why is it that in secondary school, students are having lessons in English at this level?
- Where is the urgency to equip these students with the complex language skills they need to make meaning out of their secondary subjects?

Concluding remarks

I sometimes think the agenda of cultural diversity and difference in Torres Strait Islander education is all about what's not being done and about what's not going to happen.

The reality for Islanders is that culture is really important to us. We need and desire people to respect what we are, to acknowledge that we are different. We want to have our Islander ways. We like our languages and our traditions. And we identify as a group through a lot of shared practices. We want to be in control of these things.

These issues, yes, need to be accounted for in educational programs.

However, the reality too is that we share similar concerns of other Australians. We want our land too. We also need jobs. We want to own our own homes too. We also need loans. Like everyone else, we are always pursuing improvements in health, housing, education. We need some independence too from the paternal arms of government and their welfare-dependent economics. We have material needs the same as any other Australian.

Except of course, our costs of living are higher, our standards of living are lower, our rate of employment is lower, our health standards are lower. And despite historical changes, we are still dependent on governments and their officials.

Still in the position of negotiating our future!

These issues can only be pursued by Islanders if we have a proper grounding in the language of knowledges, and an education that can provide us with a full understanding of how we, as Indigenous peoples, are positioned by/in them.

How is it going to be done?

I haven't got all the answers and I don't know a whole lot about teaching English but I feel sure of this. It's time we accepted that Islanders need to be taught English with a renewed vigour, with the goal in mind that they need to access the complexity of all that English entails in the modern world.

As I have tried to argue, it's time we accepted that we need it for political purposes, that's what our struggle is and always has been. It's time we started developing a model that pursues this goal from the outset – a model that prescribes some sort of monitoring of goals that reflects the urgency of the project.

It would help if the efforts were not piecemeal and fractured, as they are presently. It would also help if all those involved could consider themselves on the same side of the fence, rather than shooting down anyone who has different ideas.

We are in need of a great big think-tank, and we will need all the 'white' liberals I'm sure to be on our side. But they will need to fully understand where Islanders are coming from. And equally important, if not more importantly, they will need to not be blind to where they are coming from, nor to the constraints they find themselves in. You see, if they begin to do this, they may well begin to understand how Islanders are being regulated and imprisoned by the current intellectual agenda of cultural priorities in exactly the same way that we were regulated and imprisoned by the policy of 'Protection'.

And, if any one in the field of literacy education ever asks me again what I know of the Torres Straits because I no longer reside there, I'm going to forget every ounce of Western reason and logic that I've ever learnt, then I'm going to harness all the cultural capital I can, and punch them out, because without the English language, that is the only resource to power and control that I, and my fellow Torres Strait Islanders, have.

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CHAPTER 3

Scaffolding Reading and Writing for Indigenous Children in School

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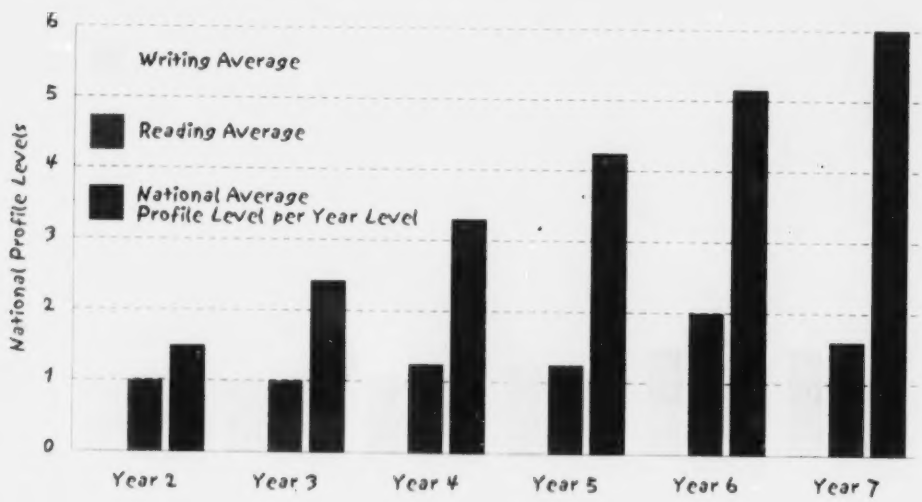
In this chapter we report on a literacy teaching approach that is enabling Indigenous learners to successfully read and write texts that are appropriate for their school years, across the curriculum. The approach employs a sequence of strategies that provide scaffolding support for students to read complex texts fluently and accurately, and then to use the features of literate language that they are learning to read in their own writing. These strategies have grown out of work with indigenous students in Central Australia during the 1980s, and have since been further developed in the Schools & Community Centre, University of Canberra, with school students from all backgrounds experiencing severe literacy difficulties. They are currently being refined and successfully implemented in work with indigenous students from Central Australian communities in primary and secondary schools. The chapter begins by reviewing the needs of indigenous students for improvement in school participation and achievement rates and some current responses to these issues. This is followed by a discussion of the scaffolding literacy strategies, in the context of some of the kinds of texts that indigenous students may hear, read and write during their school career. The first of these is a traditional Western Desert Dreaming story, transcribed and translated to exemplify the kinds of meanings and wordings that are familiar in the oral modes of both indigenous languages and English. This is then compared with examples of English narratives and factual texts that students are now reading and writing in the schools we are working with.

The need for improving literacy achievements

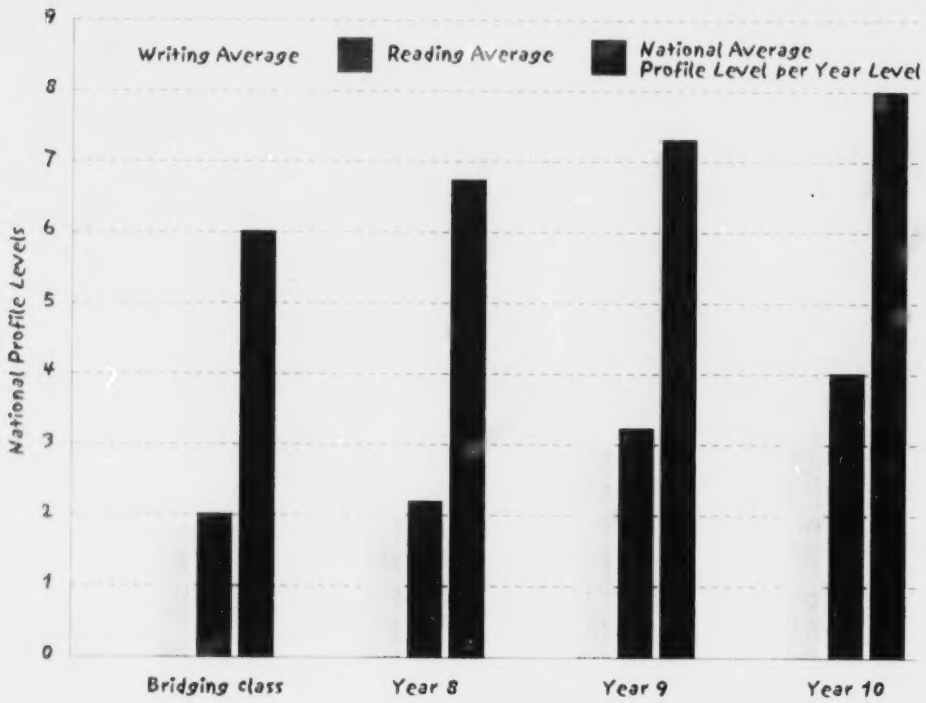
A series of reports have been published in Australia documenting alarmingly low levels of literacy in indigenous community schools. In 1996 for example, a major Northern Territory survey reported that "students in remote Aboriginal schools are, at best, three (3) years behind their urban counterparts and, at worst, seven (7) years behind" (NT Public Accounts Committee 1996:13). These results for indigenous students are consistent with the findings of the recent National Literacy Assessments (ACER 1997), and with assessments of students' reading and writing that we have conducted across remote community schools in South Australia, and in the Wiltja high school annexe program for central Australian indigenous students in Adelaide (Schools & Community Centre 1998). The results of this survey are briefly summarised below. In the survey, writing samples were collected for each student in primary and secondary classes, and analysed against the criteria and example texts for the National Profile Levels (ACER 1997). Running record analyses of reading were collected for each student in primary and secondary classes, and their results set against the reading criteria for the Profile Levels. A student assessed as operating within Profile Level 2, for example, would be able to read a text rated at this profile level with 90% accuracy. We found a clear pattern of widening gaps between indigenous students' literacy outcomes at each year level, and the average expectations for their years in the Profile Levels. Figure 1 illustrates these widening gaps in primary school years. It compares class averages for reading and writing at each year level in the community schools we surveyed, with the national average Profile Level for each year level.

Figure 1: Reading and writing levels in remote SA community schools against national averages



In Year 2, students' average performance would be classified as 'emergent literacy'. This is already behind the general pattern in Australian schools, since most mainstream students are normally writing by Year 2. This lag in literacy achievement was even more marked in Year 3, when still no students had progressed beyond Profile Level 1. By Year 4 only 10% were now at Profile Level 2, while the remainder were still emergent writers. There was a very slight improvement by Year 5, with 25% at Profile Level 2, but still no students were writing above junior primary level (Profile Levels 1 and 2). By Year 6, half the students were writing at Profile Level 2, and 20% at Profile Level 3. However it is a matter of serious concern that by this time, no students were reading and writing above middle primary level (Profile Level 3), and 40% were still emergent writers. By Year 7, literacy levels actually fell, with none above Profile Level 2, reflecting the enrolment of the most successful students in the Wiltja high school annexe program in Adelaide. The progress of this group is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Reading and writing levels in secondary annexe program against national averages



Even this most successful group of indigenous students are severely disadvantaged going into mainstream secondary schooling with middle primary level literacy skills. There is a slight improvement following a year long bridging program, but only a fraction of that required to engage successfully with Year 8 (high school in SA and NT begins in Year 8). There is then an improvement of one Profile Level per year for Years 9 and 10, representing attrition of weaker students as well as improvement for those remaining. By Year 10, the average literacy levels of these students are equivalent to the average Profile Levels for Year 5 primary school. For the 80-90% of young indigenous people remaining in their communities, who do not have access to formal education beyond junior secondary years, opportunities in schooling, training and employment are very limited. In the face of the figures from all these reports, there can be little doubt that academic literacy is one of the major contributing factors in the problems facing indigenous Australian communities. Such problems include the lowest high school completion and further education rates for any group in Australia, the highest unemployment levels, the lowest per capita income, the worst health statistics, and tragic levels of imprisonment and substance abuse amongst both adults and young people.

Indigenous communities are very aware of the relationship between these problems and English literacy outcomes in their schools, and are increasingly demanding higher standards of English literacy teaching. For example, Chris Japangardi Poulson of Yuendumu NT, is quite clear about the root cause of unemployment in his community, "At the moment not enough English is taught in school and because of this there are many Aboriginal people who cannot get work of any kind" (1988). Yami Lester from the Pitjantjatjara communities, has high expectations for the children learning English, "If they read and write and speak English they can work in offices, they can go to college or university. They can learn to be accountants, mechanics, electricians, plumbers, builders. If we don't get a good education for them, we're always going to have white advisers in the communities" (1993). Martin Nakata of Torres Strait is critical of paternalist ideologies that devalue English literacy teaching in indigenous education. "I suspect, in fact I know, that the teaching of English is geared down, ...and the arguments for teaching traditional languages are in the ascendancy because linguists and anthropologists tell us we won't have an identity without it. ...I think that the understanding of the historical call for English might help proponents of bilingualism to really think about all the possibilities in trying to meet Islanders' need for English, or at the very least, to not override the urgency of effective English teaching" (this volume).

Together with these indigenous leaders, teachers and education departments are generally also very concerned about the serious problems with English literacy confronting indigenous children in school. The range of responses to this discouraging situation, quoted in major reports such as Provision of Education Services to Remote Aboriginal Communities in the NT (Public Accounts Committee 1996), Desert Schools Report (NLLIA 1996), and the National Literacy Assessments (ACER 1997),

fall into two broad categories. One type of response has been to assign responsibility to the students, and their families and communities, to contribute to improving their literacy by changing their behaviours or language practices in the home. Factors that are frequently cited include regularity of attendance, students' attitudes and behaviour in the classroom, a perceived lack of oral competence in English, and low levels of support for English literacy in the home and community. Another type of response assigns responsibility to teachers to change their modes of interaction with students in the classroom. This category includes Malin's (1994) findings that common behavioural control strategies used by teachers should be modified to avoid alienating young indigenous children, and Malcolm's (1979, 1991) proposals that teacher directed lesson topics and questioning sequences be dropped in indigenous classrooms in favour of topics and interactions controlled by the children.

While each of these responses may have some relevance to the problems of indigenous students' participation in school, none seriously address the issue of how teachers can provide students with access to the academic-literate discourses of schooling, at levels appropriate for their ages. The first type of response is least likely to lead to effective outcomes, because it focuses on factors that are largely out of teachers' and schools' control. While the second response type does address aspects of teaching, the focus is on features of classroom interaction at the expense of learning goals. These responses are widespread in community schools and departments, as they seem to provide plausible reasons for continuing low achievements of indigenous students. As a result their effect has been to divert efforts from the difficult problem of providing access academic-literate discourses, and the schools' primary responsibility for doing so. Far from providing such access, teaching practices in most of the classrooms we have observed are clustered primarily around activities that are least taxing to students, and which consequently produce little educational progress, resulting in the outcomes shown in Figures 1 and 2. Similar observations have often been made in other studies of indigenous community classrooms, such as M. Christie (1984), Harris (1985) and Folds (1987).

The reasons for such low levels of academic activity can be viewed from two perspectives. On one hand, teachers frequently report that if they push students in community classrooms into academic tasks that are too unfamiliar, communication between teacher and students becomes difficult, as Malin and Malcolm report, and classroom behaviour tends to deteriorate. Consequently behaviour management comes to be the implicit determining factor in classroom practices, rather than academic goals, which come to be pitched at a level that will ensure a manageable class. Over time within the school culture, this pattern leads to the second factor – the low expectations that teachers have for their students' academic progress, in comparison to what they would expect of a mainstream class, and the low expectations that students tend to have of themselves. The outcome, as Harris (1985) and Folds (1987) point out, is that for much of the time indigenous children are

typically engaged in what is commonly referred to as unproductive 'busywork'.

> The most effective and pervasive teacher coping strategy is busywork based on worksheet activities. Busywork activities in the settlement schools use copying, colouring and drawing which are capable of holding the attention of the Pitjantjatjara children, and this makes them highly attractive to teachers. Engaged in colouring or drawing on worksheets, the children often work away quite happily for half an hour or so at a time (Folds 1987:48-9).

Current literacy practices

We found that in junior primary classrooms surveyed, literacy activities consisted largely of copying, firstly letters from the alphabet, and then sentences or brief texts, as well as low level 'phonemic awareness' drills. No child was independently reading or writing by the end of Year 2. In middle primary classes, the most common reading activity consisted of individualised reading programs, using picture readers from remedial reading programs, as well as listening to the teacher read and sometimes reading aloud to the teacher. Writing activities included journal writing, in which learners attempt to write texts from their own experience or from oral discussions, and a great deal of copying from the board. These individualised activities are derived partly from common progressive philosophies that promote 'child-centred' teaching approaches in mainstream classrooms, in which most students come to school with extensive experience of reading in the home. In the context of indigenous community schools, their outcome is to reduce the opportunities for interaction around academically challenging tasks. This in turn reduces the potential communication problems between teachers and students, but leaves indigenous students largely to try and learn to read and write for themselves.

The same activities were continued into upper primary classes, with some students reading slightly higher level texts in their individualised programs, and writing slightly longer recounts of personal experience. However a significant number had not learnt to read or write independently at all, but had instead developed elaborate self-taught coping strategies such as memorising reading books, or surreptitious copying. The majority were still reading basal readers in their individual reading programs, right up to Years 6 and 7, and writing no more than simple recounts. In all years, by far the most common writing activity was copying from the board, and all students exhibited some level of dependent behaviours such as continual appealing to teachers while reading. Over the course of the primary years, individualised reading and writing activities led to widening gaps between those children who were able to make some progress in their literacy skills, and those who barely advanced at all. This created greater problems for teachers, who found themselves forced to teach to a level that at least the majority could easily engage in, in order to minimise disruptive behaviour from students who could not engage in academically challenging tasks.

We found that the basal readers used in the individual reading programs encourage indigenous students to perceive reading as a ritual practice of the school that has no pleasurable or communicative function. As a consequence students do not choose to read books because they are interesting or enjoyable, but because they are the only books they can read by 'sounding out' letter-by-letter, or memorise and appear to be reading, and so get praise from the teacher when they finish them. The handful of students we observed who had learnt to do more than sound out new words letter-by-letter were reading more complex texts, but without the comprehension necessary to get enjoyment from what they were reading. Because students are not learning how to engage with literate texts, they have no models on which they can draw in their writing, at the levels of subject matter, text staging or of literate types of meanings and wordings. The outcomes for writing by all students are recycling of a very small range of brief texts, almost all simple recounts or observation-comments, using an extremely limited range of vocabulary and other language features (Gray 1986, 1990, Rose 1998). No writing samples we collected from community schools were recognisable as factual texts, except where they were copied from the board. The following example (Text 1), written by a 12 year old upper primary student, is typical of students' journals, the main context for independent writing.

Text 1 Tuesday 3/6

> Yesterday I was playing games and after that I saw Craig was coming. I went to play on the trampoline and Last Night we were playing hide and seek. I went home. I went to sleep. This morning Me and Craig were playing game's and we came to school.

Three weeks later, this student had a more unusual personal experience to recount (Text 2). In response, the teacher's encouraging comment was 'Excellent interesting story. Good English'.

Text 2 Wednesday 26/6

> Yesterday I went with my dad to Umuwa for Meeting and after that we went to Ernabella for Shop and I saw My auntie and My sister and My brother and we all went to the Shop and me and Winmati and My dad came back to Nyapari. We had supper and after that we went to Slide Night and after that we all went home.

Texts such as 1 and 2 are well below the levels of their writers' oral competence in either their first languages or English. They are also well below most students' potential for both writing and reading. Yet as many teachers will recognise, they are often the only kind of writing produced by indigenous students in community schools, and often also in urban schools. Students such the writer of Texts 1 and 2 are still writing these texts as 'English' activities after six or more years at primary school, and even high school. They are well and truly fossilised at a standard that is set not by their

teachers, but by their peers. Throughout remote community schools, indigenous students have taught each other to write these kinds of texts, in the absence of other substantial direction in how to control the language features of written English. As a result, the few students who are able to enter high school programs are unable to independently read and write the texts demanded by the curriculum, and are completely dependent on support teachers to help them with their class and home work. Support teachers in the high school program stated that the level of help students needed to complete their work was so time-consuming that there was no time available for teaching them to read their set texts. This meant that the students remained dependent throughout the junior secondary years, and all but two were unable to complete high school.

The Scaffolding Literacy approach

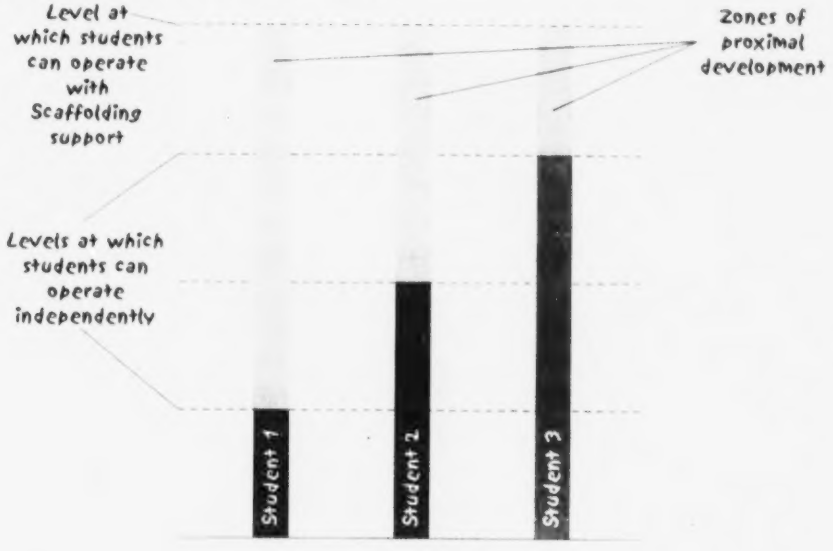
To demonstrate how the difficulties in academic progress outlined above can be overcome, we are working with teachers and indigenous students from Years 1 to 10, in community school and secondary school settings. The Scaffolding Literacy approach we are using was first developed in Australia for indigenous students at Traeger Park primary school in Alice Springs (reported in Gray 1986, 1987, 1990, and in detail in Gray to appear). It was initially developed for younger children, using experiential learning situations called 'concentrated language encounters'. The principle of concentrated encounters was to employ interaction in direct joint experiences, such as learning to ride horses, or hatching chickens in the classroom, that could lead to jointly constructing written texts such as specialised procedures or science explanations. The kinds of shared understandings developed experientially in concentrated encounters at Traeger Park were also constructed around the joint exploration of written texts between teacher and learners. For this reason the teaching sequence developed for concentrated language encounters contributed to the evolution of the 'genre' approach to writing development (eg. Martin, F. Christie and Rothery 1987, F. Christie et al 1990-92, Hyon 1996), which has begun to influence literacy teaching in indigenous education. Scaffolding approaches for use with written texts have been further developed and refined in the programs of the Schools & Community Centre, University of Canberra, for primary and secondary students with severe literacy difficulties (Gray, Cowey and Graetz 1995, in press).

The Scaffolding approach seeks to work with students at or close to their full potential, such as at the literacy Profile Level appropriate for their school year, by giving them adequate support to operate at this level. Scaffolding enables learners to read and write complex texts with the support of their teachers and peers. It does so by initially supporting students to understand the roles of the language features that constitute a written text, as a means to fluently and accurately read the text without becoming overloaded. This shared understanding of the meanings in the text is then

exploited as a basis for spelling and writing activities in which the students gradually acquire more independent control over literate discourse.

Three conceptual frameworks inform the approach: a model of spoken and written language, a model of reading, and a model of learning. The model of learning derives from the work of Vygotsky (eg. 1978) who saw learning as a social process, that takes place in interaction between learners and teachers, in what he termed a 'zone of proximal development' that exists between what learners can do on their own, and what they can achieve in interaction with a teacher. The social process of a teacher initially providing maximum support, and the learner gradually taking over responsibility for a task has been referred to as 'scaffolding' by Bruner (1986). This social conception of learning differs from that which lies behind the individualised activities observed in community classrooms, which operate at the level of each child's independent ability. In contrast our work has shown that indigenous students can be supported to read complex texts fluently that are well above their normal independent reading level, by building up a high level of intersubjectivity between teacher and students through detailed discussion of the texts they are reading. By building up this common ground for discussion, the approach short-circuits the communication difficulties that teachers so often experience in indigenous classrooms. Because it operates at a level above students' normal independent ability, the approach also helps to resolve the problem of a wide range of ability levels in the class. While the best students are learning above their normal standard, even the weakest readers in the class are supported to engage with the texts under focus. The Vgotskyan model is illustrated in the following diagram (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Using scaffolding to bridge between students' independent and supported operating levels


Level at which students can operate with Scaffolding support
Zones of proximal development
Levels at which students can operate independently
Student 1
Student 2
Student 3

The Scaffolding Literacy approach begins with students learning to read complex texts that will later provide models for their writing. The model of reading used involves two sets of skills (illustrated in Figure 4 below):

- orthographic processing of letter patterns in words,
- meaning prediction of the ways in which a literate text unfolds.

Both sets of skills are integral to fluent reading. Experienced readers are able to do so because they can predict the sequences in which written meanings are likely to unfold in a text, at the same time as they automatically process the visual patterns of letters in words. Weak readers on the other hand, bring only low level skills to the task; their meaning prediction skills come only from their commonsense, oral experience, and they frequently attempt to read by sounding out words letter-by-letter. It is for these reasons that students may be unable to read more complex texts than basal sentence readers. They are under too much processing stress, attempting to sound out each word on the page, to attend to sequences of meaning any larger than a short sentence. Scaffolding enables weak readers to use meaning prediction to support their low level graphophonic skills, in order to read a complex text fluently. Such texts then become a resource for developing high order orthographic processing skills.

Figure 4: Model of reading

	Orthographic processing	Meaning prediction
High order skills	**Automatic processing of visual patterns in words**	**Literate meanings of written texts**
Low order skills	**Low order graphophonics, 'sounding-out' words**	**Commonsense, oral meanings from everyday experience**

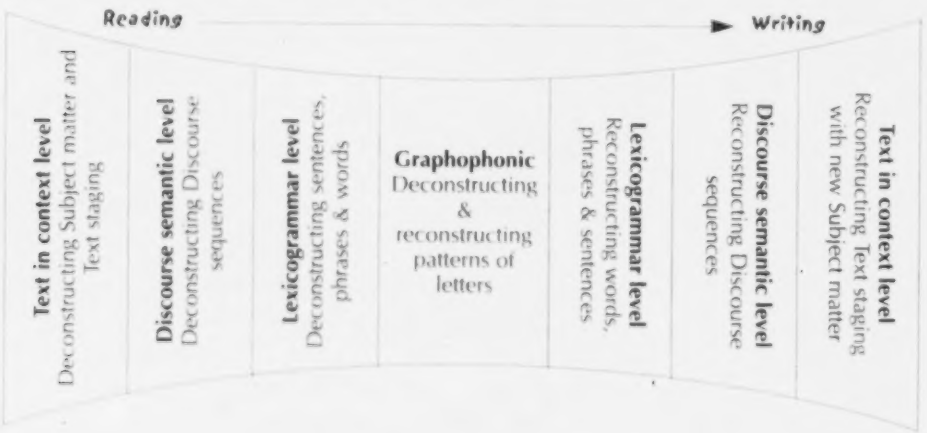
Finally, the model of language used to support learners to make the shift from low to high order reading skills is a functional one, drawing on Halliday's (1994) description of functional grammar. In a functional model, language is conceived of in terms of **texts** that are exchanged in social contexts, between speakers, writers and readers. Each text involves three levels of organisation, as sequences of **meanings** (discourse semantics), as patterns of **wordings** that realise these meanings (lexicogrammar), and as **soundings or letter patterns** that realise these wordings (graphophonics). This is an integrated model of language in its social contexts, in which each level is realised (ie. expressed, symbolised, manifested) by the next level. It is reflected in our commonsense conceptions of language as meaning, as wording and as sounding or letter patterns, but has been developed through careful analysis of how texts work.

The Scaffolding Literacy sequence begins with the social context of the text to be read, in a general orientation phase in which teacher and students jointly explore its subject matter, its purposes, and the stages it goes through to achieve its purposes, such as the Orientation, Complication and Resolution stages in a narrative. Secondly,

general orientation involves deconstructing the sequences of meanings in segments of the text, at the level of sentences and groups of sentences. For example, we might discuss how a narrative segment consists of a sequence of actions involving the characters, followed by their reactions in the form of thinking, feeling or saying. These levels of general orientation, to a text's subject matter, its staging, and its discourse semantic patterns, are common pre-reading activities in many classrooms. However the Scaffolding Literacy approach now goes further, into a high order orientation to the text, at the level of the wordings that realise its meanings. By means of a careful discussion and questioning cycle described below, learners' attention is now focused on the grammatical and lexical features of the text.

These levels of general and high order orientation – to subject matter, text staging, meaning and wording – are what enable weak readers to comprehend and fluently read a complex text. Once they are able to do so, and can recognise its words out of context, the Scaffolding sequence then shifts down to the next language level of graphophonics, focusing learners' attention on the letter patterns that make up the words they are familiar with from the text. The sequence then turns to the writing phase, and as it does so it moves back up through the levels of language in the functional model. The first step moves back up to the level of wording, employing the same discussion and questioning cycles to support learners to reconstruct whole phrases and sentences from the text, using what they have learned about the letter patterns in its words, and the grammatical patterns in its sentences. The next step moves up to the level of discourse sequences, using writing plans to reconstruct segments of the text. Finally it moves back up to the level of text staging and subject matter, as learners practise to write new texts that are patterned on the organisation of the ones they have been learning to read and reconstruct. These phases of the Scaffolding sequence and levels of language are illustrated in the following diagram, Figure 5.

Figure 5: Scaffolding sequence and levels of language



As well as informing the strategies used in each phase of the Scaffolding sequence, the functional model of language also enables us to plan a curriculum sequence logically. On one hand it enables us to analyse texts for their level of difficulty, so that we know which books to select for reading orientation at each level of schooling, and we know exactly which language features to focus on at each stage. This also enables us to construct a curriculum for each year and each term, that builds in a rational sequence from easier to more difficult texts. On the other hand the functional language model enables us to select which types of texts to focus on in each area of the curriculum, and how to deconstruct them. In the English curriculum for example, we can begin with brief narrative genres, and move on to short stories and then novels with more complex structures. In the science curriculum, we have begun with the report genre in animal classification, at various levels of difficulty, and then moved on to explanations of natural phenomena such as life cycles. In the social sciences curriculum we can explore genres such as geography reports, historical accounts and discussions and arguments. The materials produced in genre-based writing approaches are invaluable in this regard (eg. F. Christie et al 1990-92).

It should be noted that while the functional model of language parallels our commonsense one of meaning, wording and sounds/letters, it is very different from the traditional 'formal' grammars that still influence school practices. The formal view of language starts at the bottom, with lists of sounds in a language, and then represents grammar as formal structures of words and sentences. Meaning is a marginal element in formal grammars, and whole texts are rarely considered. This view of language is reflected in language pedagogies that begin, first of all with lists of letters and blends out of context (eg. alphabet and phonics exercises), then with lists of words out of context (spelling lists), then with types of wordings out of context (grammar exercises), and use 'remedial' programs of basal readers that have one word to a page, then one phrase, then a sentence or two. In keeping with the formal view of language, these basal readers are focused more on word or sentence structures than on meaning, and so are frequently artificial and literally meaningless.

In teaching indigenous school students to write, we have to start with reading and we have to show students how to attend to literate resources important to their writing development as they read. We can do so using meaningful whole texts which display the kinds of literate resources that authors use. Moreover, we have to prepare students for reading in such a way that they are not cognitively overloaded. It is only when learners are reading a text fluently that they have the capacity to attend to language choices to do with building fine levels of meaning in a text. Furthermore, as later discussion will point out, it is in the very start of the teaching sequence during the orientation phase that students should begin to have their attention drawn towards specific language choices selected by the teacher for development.

In order to scaffold students effectively into reading complex texts fluently, and using the features of such texts in their writing, teachers need to have a strong general understanding of the differences between spoken and written language, and of the

features of written English they wish to draw their students' attention to. To this end, we will illustrate in the next section, some features of spoken language, both indigenous Australian languages and English. We will then contrast these patterns of spoken text with some features of written English texts that students are likely to meet in primary and junior secondary schooling.

Spoken and written language

In its spoken mode, the English language makes meanings in surprisingly similar ways to Australian languages, despite the great depth of time over which their cultures have separately developed (Rose 1993, 1996, 1998). This can be illustrated by looking at the language features of a traditional indigenous Australian narrative, and comparing them with their English translation. The narrative on the following page (Text 3) is a brief extract from a story of the Pitjantjatjara people, one of a large number of origin myths that make up the cosmology known in indigenous Australia as the Dreaming (see eg. Stanner 1966). This Dreaming story relates the origin of huge *wanampi* serpents that are said to dwell in the deep waterhole of Piltati creek in the Mann Ranges, SA. In this stage of the story, two women are digging up burrows looking for small game, when one comes across the burrow of the *wanampi* serpents, believing them to be merely large *kuniya* desert pythons. When she tries to pull the tail of the serpent, it nearly drags her back into the burrow.

To follow the *Piltati* story in Pitjantjatjara, it may help to read it aloud, placing the stress on the first syllable of each word. After several re-readings it is possible to attain a reasonable level of fluency, so that the Pitjantjatjara wordings will begin to make sense without the scaffolding support of the English glosses below each line. Each line is a step in the narrative, and is numbered so it can be referred to in the discussion following.

Despite being a traditional, and probably very ancient myth told by a Pitjantjatjara elder, this story shares many of the features of familiar English oral tables. This story is told to entertain children, and in this respect resembles one of the functions of tables. However, as a Dreaming story it also encodes levels of meaning that are only known to older people, including abstract principles of social and natural order. Unfortunately there is not the space here to go into these aspects of the story, since we need to focus on the meanings that are apparent and relevant to young learners.

From this perspective, the story consists of a series of character's actions, followed by their reactions, expressed as 'thinking' and 'speaking'. Its staging begins with an Orientation stage that first introduces the characters and then recounts their activities, the women digging (1-2), one sister commanding (3), the other one going and seeing a burrow (4-7), the serpent entering and lying inside the burrow (8-9) the woman thinking and then pulling the serpent (10-11). This apparently everyday sequence of activities builds up an atmosphere that is suddenly shattered in line 12, when the

Text 3 Piltati told by Nganyintja (transcribed & translated by David Rose)

1	*kangkuru-rara kutjara*	*tjawa-ningi*				
	two sisters	*were digging*				
2	*watarku*	*minyma kutjara*	*tjawa-ningi tjawa-ra*	*tjawa-ra*		
	heedlessly	*the two women*	*were digging,*	*digging and digging*		
3	*ka*	*watja-nu*	*wanyu*	*wili*	*mantji-la*	
	and (one)	*told*	*"please*	*long stick*	*fetch"*	
4	*ka kutju*	*a-nu*				
	and (the other) one	*did go*				
5	*munu*	*anku-la nya-ngu*	*nyaa nyangatja*	*pupa-nyi*	*wanampi purunpa*	
	and	*while going sa-*	*"what (is) this?*	*crouching*	*like a wanampi"*	
6	*kuniya-lta*	*palku*				
	a desert python, that is	*(she thought) mistakenly*				
7	*piti tjaa*	*nya-ngu*	*nyangatja*	*piti tjaa*		
	the mouth of a burrow	*(she) saw*	*"this*	*(is) a burrow*	*mouth"*	
8	*wanampi-lta pupa-ra*	*ma-tjarpa-ngu*				
	that wanampi lying there	*had gone inside (the burrow)*				
9	*munu kunyu*	*ila-lta*	*ma-ngara-ngi*			
	and it's said	*close inside*	*was lying*			
10	*ka kunyu*	*nyaku-la kuli-nu*	*ka*	*ngayulu kutju-ngku*	*witi-la*	
	and it's said	*(she) saw it and thought*	*"ah,*	*I on my*	*own will catch it!"*	
11	*munu kunyu*	*ma-witi-ntjikitja-ngku*	*ngalya-ila-ra*			
	but it's said	*in order to catch it*	*as she was pulling it towards her*			
12	*nguwanpa*	*ma-tjarpatju-nu*	*palunya*			
	(it) nearly	*dragged back inside*	*her*			
13	*minyma panya paluru*	*pakara wirtjapaka-nu*				
	that woman	*jumped up and ran*				
14	*munu kunyu*	*pitja-la watja-nu*		*wanyu*	*paka-ra pitja*	
	and it's said	*coming (to her sister) she said*		*"please*	*get up and come!"*	
15	*kangkuru*	*watja-lku-na-nta*				
	"older sister	*will I tell you?"*				
16	*ka kangkuru-ngku*	*watja-nu*	*nyaa-n*	*nya-ngu nyaa*	*nyaa*	
	and her sister	*said*	*"what-you*	*did see?*	*what? what?"*	
17	*wala-ngku*	*watja-la*	*nyaa-n*	*wangka-nyi*		
	"quickly	*tell!*	*what-you*	*are saying?"*		
18	*wanyu puta*	*pitja-la nya-wa*				
	"would you please	*come and look"*				
19	*kuniya pulka alatjitu*	*tjarpa-ngu*				
	"an utterly huge python	*entered (a burrow)*				
20	*piti-ngka*	*-ni*	*nguwanpa tjarpa-tju-nu*			
	"into a burrow	*me*	*nearly dragged inside*			
21	*pulka mulapa*					
	"(it's) really huge"					

wanampi serpent nearly drags the woman back into its burrow. This Complication is followed by an Evaluation as she runs back to her sister, excitedly telling her what she has seen. The dialogue between the two sisters from 14 to 21 is a crucial resource here, for building the feeling of excitement, and also for constructing the characters as a deferential younger sister, who first saw the serpent, and the dominant older sister who demands to know what she has seen. (Because this extract is part of a much longer narrative, the Resolution stage is not included here.)

Below the level of text staging, each step in the sequence (that is presented in Text 3 as a numbered line) is generally either:

- an action, eg. *two sisters were digging*, or
- a character's reaction as 'thinking' or 'saying', eg. *and the woman thought "ah, I on my own will catch it!"*.

Each action is realised as a **clause**, which in writing is written as a simple sentence with a capital letter and full stop, eg. 'Two sisters were digging.' Whether it is spoken or written, the clause is the integral unit of meaning in the grammars of all languages, expressing various kinds of 'doing', 'thinking/saying' or 'being', so sentences have evolved in writing to denote a clause. In the reaction, there are two clauses, one expressing the 'thinking' *and the woman thought*, and the other 'what was thought' *"ah, I on my own will catch it!"*. In writing this would be written as a complex sentence, eg. "Ah, I alone will catch it," she thought.

Finally line 21 is a description, a kind of 'being' – 'it is really huge'. The Pitjantjatjara clause is simply two words *pulka mulapa* 'really huge', but English descriptive clauses require a 'being' verb 'is', as well as a subject 'it', so it is translated above as '(it's) really huge'. So in both English and Australian languages, steps in the sequence of a text are expressed by clauses, of which there are three general kinds – 'doing', 'thinking/saying' and 'being'.

The next level of meaning is expressed by the groups of words that make up each clause. In the story each word group is glossed underneath in English. These word groups express three general types of meanings:

- processes eg. *tjawa-ningi* 'were digging',
- participants in these processes that are 'people' *minyma kutjara* 'two women', or 'things' *piti tjaa* 'mouth of a burrow',
- circumstances associated with them, such as 'places', *piti-ngka* 'in a burrow', 'qualities' *watarku* 'heedlessly', *pulka mulapa* 'really huge', or 'times'.

These meanings expressed by groups of words in Pitjantjatjara can generally be translated directly into an equivalent word group in English. Sometimes the meaning will be realised by two or more words in English, such as 'were digging' or 'in a burrow', but as one word with an ending in Pitjantjatjara, *tjawa-ningi* and *piti-ngka*, but the unit of meaning is the same.

The next level of meaning is realised by each individual word. At this level, most words can also be translated directly from Pitjantjatjara into English, for example

minyma 'woman', *kutjara* 'two'. On the other hand, some words can't be translated into one word in English, for example *wili* means 'a long flexible stick for poking into burrows to feel for animals'. This is an item of technology that is important in Australian cultures but has no equivalent or name in English. Since the technology and other fields of English culture have expanded so enormously over the past few centuries, there are now a great many English words that do not translate directly into Pitjantjatjara.

All of the features of wording and text structure that we can see in this Dreaming story can also be found in the literate English texts that students meet in primary school, but they are often employed in patterns that differ from speaking. A major reason for this is that the resources of oral storytelling, of intonation and voice quality, as well as the shared knowledge between speaker and listeners, have to be replaced in writing by the resources of the wording alone, and the sequencing of wordings. Some features that are infrequent in speech are major components of writing, and there are also many features of written English that are simply not part of typical spoken discourse. An obvious example is the richer vocabulary required in writing to express descriptions and exact meanings, but this applies equally at the levels of word groups, sentences and text stages.

A useful starting point for looking at these features that is comparable to the *Piltati* story is the Aesops fable *Lion and the Mouse*. The following extract (Text 4) is from an illustrated version of the fable, at reading Profile Level 3. We have often used it to teach reading with younger readers whose starting point was at Profile Levels 1-2.

Text 4 'The Lion and the Mouse' retold by Patricia Scott (1993)

> One day a lion was resting when a little mouse, who lived nearby, ran playfully over his back and down over his head to the ground.
>
> The lion stirred and, reaching out, caught the mouse beneath his paw. "Mouse," he said, "you have disturbed my sleep. I think I will eat you."
>
> "Oh, pardon, my Lord," said the mouse. "Please do not eat me. Perhaps, if you forgive me, someday I may be able to do something to help you."
>
> The lion laughed. "You, a little mouse, help me, the king of the beasts?" He laughed again, but he lifted his paw, allowing the mouse to go free. With a hasty 'thank you", the mouse ran off before the lion could change his mind.

At the level of text staging, the overall unfolding of The Lion and the Mouse is comparable with that of the Piltati dreaming story. The Orientation in the first paragraph is followed by a Complication in the second, that is reacted to by the mouse in the third, and resolved in the last. Again the relative status of the characters, as a dominating Lion and deferential Mouse, is constructed in their dialogue. However, below this level, although the language features of the written text are

comparable to the spoken one, the way they unfold is quite different. Rather than unfolding as a simple sequence of events and reactions, each step in the written story is expanded, elaborating on the events, the characters or the locations. For example the first sentence begins with an apparently simple statement:

1 One day a lion was resting

If we were drawing only on oral experience, we would expect this sentence to be completed with a place, such as *under a tree*, since actions in oral stories tend to include little more additional information than where or when it occurred. This is also a typical structure in the Piltati story, such as *it nearly dragged me* ***into a burrow***. However in the written fable, this typical pattern is interrupted with the following expansion.

2 when a little mouse

Now from our oral experience we would expect the sentence to be completed with the mouse's action, such as *ran*. However, instead of going straight to the action the mouse's character is first elaborated with a quality that is relevant for its role later in the story (since he passes by again and rescues the lion from a hunter's net he is caught in).

3 who lived nearby

Only now that both characters are introduced, and the character of the mouse is expanded with a significant quality, does its action occur.

4 ran

Again, we might expect this action to be completed by a location, perhaps over the lion, but instead we learn how the action happened, further elaborating on the mouse's character.

5 playfully

Now finally, after the mouse and its action have been expanded with qualities, this complex sentence is completed with the location of the action. Nevertheless even this is not simple, but consists of three locations in sequence.

6 over his back -> and down over his head -> to the ground.

Note that 'his back' and 'his head' refer to the lion in the first clause, not to the mouse in this clause. So the reader must not only be able to negotiate this complex sequence of actions, descriptions, qualities, and sequence of places, but also recognise which of the characters is being referred to at any point.

Within each sentence of *Lion and the Mouse*, each clause or word group exemplified in lines 1 to 6, may be part of students' commonsense oral experience. Like the spoken *Piltati* story, each of these chunks of meaning consist of actions, descriptions, places, times and qualities. However the way they are sequenced in the sentence here is not typical of spoken language but of writing. Instead of a simple sequence of

actions in places, in writing the characters, the events, and even the places are continually expanded with more information. This is because writers cannot assume that their readers share any knowledge about these features of a story, whereas speakers usually can, particularly in the experience of young children. So without an orientation to written ways of meaning young learners are likely to have great difficulty understanding what the story is about, since the meanings that they expect to occur at each point do not occur. Instead there is some type of expansion of meaning that they do not expect, making the sequence of meanings in the text difficult for these readers to predict from their oral experience. To be able to independently predict the sequence of meanings, they need experience of how stories are written in English. Their problems in meaning prediction will also be greatly compounded if their graphophonic skills are weak, so that they are simultaneously under pressure, trying to decode the letter patterns in unfamiliar words such as *nearby or playfully*, and simultaneously to predict unfamiliar sequences of meaning. These are the problems that the indigenous students we are working with had, before a learning to read this text by means of a detailed orientation.

Despite its considerable differences to spoken ways of meaning, *Lion and the Mouse* is still only at reading Profile Level 3 (middle primary level). In order to engage successfully with the secondary school curriculum, students need to be reading and writing at Profile Level 5-6, and yet we found no students in the community schools surveyed who were reading or writing above Profile Level 2.

Curriculum sequencing

Just as we were able to identify differences between spoken and written ways of meaning in *Piltati* and *Lion and the Mouse*, the functional model of language allows us to identify exactly how texts become more challenging as we move up through a curriculum sequence. The following (Text 5) is an extract from a short story by Paul Jennings at Profile Level 4. At this reading level, texts are beginning to resemble adult fiction in many ways. They are becoming much longer, with multiple segments that are mini-stories in themselves. Within each segment there are more complex narrative structures, with long stages, especially long Orientations and Complications that build up the scene, the characters and the atmosphere. Elements are introduced early in the text that are significant later, and there are usually multiple participants to keep track of. In order for the whole text to make sense, readers need to be able to hold all this information in their minds as it unfolds. To do so they should be under no processing stress decoding its words at the graphophonic level. It is for this reason that this level of text becomes appropriate towards the upper primary years, as students acquire sufficient experience of reading for automatic visual processing. Older students with low graphophonic and meaning prediction skills need a high order orientation to read this level of text. Teachers in the programs we are working with have done so

successfully, leading to text patterning that we will exemplify below.

Text 5 from A Good Tip for Ghosts by Paul Jennings (1994)

A little way off behind some old rusting car bodies, I thought I heard a noise.

Pete was looking in the same direction. I was too terrified to move. I wanted to run but my legs just wouldn't work. I opened my mouth to scream but nothing came out. Pete stood staring as if he was bolted to the ground.

It was a rustling tapping noise. It sounded like someone digging around in the junk, turning things over. It was coming in our direction. I just stood there pretending to be a dead tree or post. I wished the moon would go in and stop shining on my white face. The tapping grew louder. It was coming closer.

And then we saw it. Or him. Or whatever it was. An old man, with a battered hat. He was poking the ground with a bent stick. He was rustling in the rubbish. He came on slowly. He was limping. He was bent and seemed to be holding his old, dirty trousers up with one hand. He came towards us. With a terrible shuffle.

Pete and I both noticed it at the same time. His feet weren't touching the ground. He was moving across the rubbish about 30 centimetres above the surface. It was the ghost of Old Man Chompers.

We both screeched the same word at exactly the same moment. "Run!" And did we run. We tore through the waist-high rubbish. Scrambling. Screaming. Scrabbling. Not noticing the waves of silent rats slithering out of our way. Not feeling the scratches of dumped junk. Not daring to turn and snatch a stare at the horrible spectre who hobbled behind us.

Finally, with bursting lungs, we crawled into the back of an old car. It had no doors or windows so we crouched low, not breathing, not looking, not even hoping.

Features of discourse patterns and wordings in this text, that teachers have focused on in general and high order orientations, include the following:

- A build up of tension in steps as the boys' awareness of the 'ghost' becomes more certain, and they react to their perceptions, eg. *I thought I heard a noise -> It was a rustling tapping noise -> And then we saw it -> It was the ghost of Old Man Chompers.*
- Long sequences of reaction sentences, eg. *I was **too terrified to move**. I **wanted to run** but my legs just wouldn't work. I **opened my mouth to scream** but nothing came out. Pete **stood staring** as if he was bolted to the ground.*

- Complex sentence Themes (ie. beginnings of sentences that establish circumstances), eg. *A little way off -> behind some old rusting car bodies.* These are important to set the location, time or atmosphere of text stages.
- Other complex chains of elements, eg. *someone digging around -> in the junk, -> turning things over.* These elaborate actions or circumstances, describing them more exactly.
- Complex groups of words around a noun, that provide elaborate descriptions of things or people, eg. *some old rusting car bodies... a rustling tapping noise... his old, dirty trousers... a terrible shuffle... exactly the same moment... the waist-high rubbish... the waves of silent rats... the scratches of dumped junk... the horrible spectre who hobbled behind us...*
- Wide variety of lexical choices that realise exact meanings, eg. *rustling, shuffle, screeched, scrambling, screaming, scrabbling, slithering, spectre, crawled, crouched*
- Metaphors and similes, eg. *Pete stood staring* ***as if he was bolted to the ground****... Finally,* ***with bursting lungs****,...* ***snatch a stare****...* These encourage readers to use their imaginations to picture the events or circumstances.

From a starting point for reading at Profile Levels 2-3, the indigenous students in the upper primary and junior secondary classes we worked with learnt to read this text fluently and accurately, by means of high order book orientation. They then went on to reconstruct and then write new texts patterned on this one. The Scaffolding Literacy strategies that enabled them to do so are outlined as follows.

The Scaffolding Literacy sequence

The strategies introduced here fit within an integrated literacy development sequence. In the first stage of the sequence, Book Orientation, the teacher provides maximum support for learners to fluently and accurately read all of the features of the text under focus. By the stage of Fluent Reading, the learner is beginning to control more of the process independently, and this control increases through the stages of Scaffolded Spelling, Reconstructed Writing and Text Patterning. By the time they have been supported through several scaffolding cycles and reached the stage of Independent Writing, the teacher has been able to withdraw most of the support they have provided to this point, so that learners are able to independently produce a successful text, modelled on those they have been supported to read and reconstruct. It is important to note that the model involves a progression from reading through spelling to writing. It is also extremely important to note that talking to students about language and how language choices in writing work begins in the very early stages of the

teaching sequence as the teacher is preparing students to read. This pointing out of written text choices is important at this stage because it helps students overcome language interpretation blocks as they read. However, even at this early stage, the teacher should have a deliberate progression towards writing development in mind.

The scaffolding sequence begins by building shared knowledge around the text, in the Book Orientation phase of the sequence. During book orientation the teacher prepares students for reading a text accurately without stress. Once they can read the text without having to attend to working out words, they can attend to the meaning of the text. Weak readers have difficulty engaging with many of the more complex elements of the language in the texts they read, as illustrated above for *Lion and the Mouse* and *Good Tip for Ghosts*. This then is the language a teacher focuses on in a detailed book orientation. The discussion teachers have with students before they read a text has implications not just for reading accurately, but for their overall understanding of the text and their ability to then 'borrow' from the text in their writing. After a detailed book orientation students are ready to read the text with understanding that can be recalled later during the writing process. Book orientation has four outcomes for learners:

- Becoming a code-breaker: Learners' enhanced ability to make sense at a high level allows more mental space to deal with decoding the letter patterns of words.
- Becoming a text-participant: The focus upon the staging of the text and the author's reasons for particular language choices accustoms learners to the precise levels of meaning which good writers build into their texts.
- Becoming a text-user: Drawing learners' attention to language choices at a detailed level shows them potential choices they themselves can employ in their own writing.
- Becoming a text-analyst: Engaging with a story at this level is fundamental to developing critical views about why and how authors make the choices they do in their writing.

The teachers started book orientation on *Good Tip for Ghosts* by reading and discussing the story as a whole with the class, including features such as its staging, sequences of events and reactions, the characters and their qualities and descriptions. The discussion takes the form of a cycle with three phases:

- Preformulation, in which the teacher draws students' attention to features of the text that he or she intends to focus on, giving them information about each feature that they will able to draw on in the next phase;
- Focus questions, which are carefully framed to enable students to make connections between each feature and its function in the text;

- Reformulation, in which the teacher is careful to accept students' responses to the focus questions, and then elaborates them with additional information that students are able to connect with their own responses.

The function of this discussion is not testing. It is first of all to establish shared understandings that become a basis for interaction between teacher and students around the text, and then to use this interaction to focus learners' attention on its literate language features.

Following this general discussion of the text, the teacher would read a selected passage from an overhead projection, using a coloured plastic strip to keep place so that the students can read along, and their attention can be drawn to the actual wordings that express the meanings they have discussed in the earlier phase. The discussion and re-readings of the text enable students to begin accurately predicting the sequence of meanings in the story, and so to follow the sequence as the teacher reads, even if they are not yet able to identify all its words independently. This text level of meaning prediction then forms a foundation for discussing the more detailed meanings at the level of sentences, phrases and words in chosen segments of the text, again using the overhead projection. This phase of the scaffolding sequence is known as High Order Book Orientation. It employs the same cycle of preformulating, questioning and reformulating discussion, but with a very detailed focus on the wordings that express each chunk of meaning in the text segment. The following are examples of preformulation, questioning and reformulation used for discussing the first sentence of the extract from *Good Tip for Ghosts*. The discussion begins with the complex Theme of the sentence that establishes how far away the noise was and where it was coming from.

> First of the boy who is telling the story tells us how far away the noise seemed. Can you see how the book says that? Can you read it? *(A little way off)* Can you think why it would be more scary to have the noise a little way off rather than a long way off?

Not only does the preformulation and questioning cycle enable learners to focus on the wording of this feature *(A little way off)*, and what it means in the story's context *(how far away the noise seemed)*, but it also encourages them to think critically about what the author has made this choice at this point of the story *(why it would be more scary)*. The teacher then accepts whatever the students say with 'Yes,' and then reformulates it with more information, eg. 'A noise that is close would be really scary wouldn't it?'

> Now we find out exactly where the noise was coming from. Can you read what it says? *(behind some old rusting car bodies)* Is it more scary, do you think, if a noise was coming from **behind** the old rusting car bodies? Why?

Once again, the teacher has accepted whatever the students say with 'Yes', then asked

a question focusing on the function of this location in the story. Again students responses can be reformulated with more information, eg. 'If the noise was behind something you wouldn't be able to see what it was, would you. You would start to imagine all sorts of things.' Now the focus of discussion can shift to the level of the nominal group that describes the car bodies, and the function of this description in the story as a whole.

> Paul Jennings tells us lots of information about the car bodies in the story, doesn't he? That's because if they were old and rusting they were probably real wrecks. It's important that we know about that because later in the story do you remember where the twins hide?

The teacher then points out the where the old car bodies becomes significant at the end of the passage *we crawled into the back of an old car. It had no doors or windows...* Then the next focus of discussion is on the wording that tells us the narrator isn't sure about the noise. This lack of certainty is significant because it is the first step in the gradual buildup of tension as the 'ghost' appears.

> Now we know where the noise seemed to be coming from, the next part of the story tells us that the boy telling the story isn't sure that he's heard the noise. Can you see how he tells us that he isn't sure? *(I thought I heard a noise).*

Because they are now thoroughly familiar with the sequence of meanings in the text, without having to spell all its words accurately, all the students are able to identify word groups that express each of these chunks of meaning. Discussion and questions always referred to the actual wordings of the text, so that the students learn to use the language of the text to answer them. In this way, they rapidly became familiar and comfortable, not only with the wordings of the story, but with the preformulation, questioning and reformulation strategies used to focus on the task. It is interesting to see how quickly a shift can take place in students, from a focus on interpersonal relationships, and looking for answers either from the teacher or in their own heads, towards focusing on the learning task, and looking for answers in reading texts. The kinds of communication breakdown that frequently characterise teacher-student interaction in indigenous classrooms are thus avoided. Far from being culturally inappropriate, this mode of questioning is participated in enthusiastically by all the indigenous students in the classes we have worked with. They quickly learn to predict and use the questioning strategies themselves, and this enables them to begin developing critical strategies for engaging with texts.

Initially, as students respond to the focus questions, they are invited to come out and highlight the words and word groups they have identified on the overhead transparency. This enables the whole class to watch the process and participate. At some point they might also be asked to highlight the words in their own copy of the text. Any words that students cannot identify are left without highlighting the transparency. This is then followed by joint readings of the text, with the students

reading the familiar highlighted portions, and the teacher reading the remainder. This process is continued until students are reading the selected text segment fluently.

A further intensive strategy is to use 'transformations' of sentences from the story, written out on cardboard strips. This can be done individually, in groups, or with the whole class using a board on which the cardboard strips are placed so that everyone can see them. Again students are asked to identify word groups and words in the strips, using the same types of focus questions, but then they cut out these parts of the sentences and put them back into place. This allows students to successfully manipulate the wordings of a sentence, without the added pressure of attempting to write unfamiliar words. Games are then played with these cutups, such as shuffling and getting students to re-arrange them, turning them over and asking the students to identify and then check them. Once the word groups and their sequence in the sentence are thoroughly familiar, they can then be cut up into individual words, and the same games can be played. By means of text marking, reading along with the teacher, and transformations, even the least able readers rapidly learn to read the story. They are able to do so using the resource of meaning prediction in tandem with their limited graphophonic skills, to identify each word in its context in the text.

After the book orientation it is important that the students read the text until they can read it at close to 100% accuracy. It is not possible for learners to take resources from reading until they can read the model text accurately. Once all students are able to read the story fluently and accurately, it becomes a resource for using its language features in their own writing. The first step in the writing phase of the scaffolding sequence is to ensure that students can identify all the significant words out of context of the text. This can be done using the transformation cutups as flash cards, and playing games such as 'My Pile-Your Pile', until all the words under focus are in the students' pile. They can also supported to identify words by checking them in the context of the text if they are unsure. When all the students can securely identify words out of context, they then learn to spell them, using Scaffolded Spelling strategies based on 'chunking' of letter patterns.

Scaffolded spelling begins by showing students, first of all how to identify letter patterns that make common word endings, such as *-ing, -ed, -ly, -s*, and so on, and how to chunk compound and multisyllabic words such as *litt-le, be-hind, rust-ing, bodie-s, di-rec-tion*. Each single syllable that makes up a word is also chunked into its patterns of Onset consisting of the initial consonant cluster, and Rhyme consisting of the remainder, eg. *l-itt-le, w-ay, be-h-ind, s-ome, r-ust-ing, th-ought, h-eard, n-oise, l-ook-ing, s-ame*, and so on.

Dividing words into these chunks of common letter patterns makes it much easier for students to remember the spelling of words that they already know from the text, rather than the standard spelling approach that employs lists of decontextualised words that weak readers attempt to memorise as arbitrary strings of letters, like a telephone number. The chunking approach works because it makes explicit the visual letter patterns that constitute the English spelling system, that fluent readers process

automatically as they read. By using words that the students already know, within the context of a meaningful text, they are adequately supported to move from ineffective low level graphophonic strategies, such as sounding out, towards automatic visual processing of letter patterns. We may sound out the words as we chunk them, but by saying the letter patterns that make up the word, not the names or sounds of each letter out of context of the word.

In the scaffolded spelling sequence, the teacher begins by demonstrating with the transformations, by cutting a word into its letter patterns, and then inviting students to cut the remaining words with the support of the class. Each student uses a small board and eraser on which to practise writing the letter patterns of each word, an activity enjoyed by students at all year levels. One advantage of using erasable boards with Indigenous students is that it overcomes the fear that many students have of making mistakes, or of messy writing. Because it is temporary and erasable, they can focus on the task of practising spelling instead of producing a perfect page in their workbook. After students are able to spell each of the words in a sentence, a further step is to get them to write the whole sentence. This can be supported with 'easy spelling', where the teacher writes part of the sentence and the students provide the remainder that they know well. Easy spelling is a co-operative process where teacher and students work together to reconstruct part of a text. In the absence of overload the students are able to develop meaning/linguistic competence at the same time as practising spelling.

By the time the teacher and students have shared a detailed book orientation and carried out the scaffolded spelling activities as described above, much of the deconstruction of a text will have been done. By this time the students will be completely familiar with the model text. They will have a detailed understanding of the text's meaning and will have written some of the text in easy spelling. In addition, they will have discussed why the author made certain language choices when writing the text. They will understand for example that an author plans a text with a sequence of stages, and will have looked at these stages in the model text. The students will also have an understanding about how the author wrote the text. This understanding could include sequencing words, image building words and how the author included characters' thoughts, feeling and reactions. Once the students can read a text accurately, recognise all the words in the text in and out of context, spell many of the words in the text, and understand the reasons why the author made certain language choices in writing the text, this text can be used to teach the students about writing.

Following this preparation the next step is Reconstructed Writing, a strategy in which teacher and students jointly reconstruct a text. This involves identifying the structure and language resources that exist in a text and rewriting it, using the language of the author. Reconstructing a text may sound like the strategy of *retelling* commonly used by teachers. Although there are some obvious similarities the underlying purpose of the strategy is quite different. While teachers usually insist that children retell a story 'in their own words' the purpose of reconstruction is to use the

actual words of the author. Learners with writing difficulties are not aware of the words in texts that are important for making a written text coherent and interesting, rather they expect that the reader will know what they mean. They do not know what they need to write to inform the reader about characters' feelings and reactions, or the amount of description they need to build up images and understanding for the reader.

Since they have never been able to read a text exactly enough to be aware of literary features of texts, they need considerable support to be able to write using these features. This support consists of removing some of the stress of writing for them by helping them take on the actual words used by an author of a text they can read.

Some short texts could be completely reconstructed. However, this strategy would also be used frequently to reconstruct a shorter segment of a longer narrative or even just a paragraph or two. For example, if the teacher wanted to teach students to use image building language they could choose a short section of the text containing a description and work on this. The first step in reconstruction is to jointly construct a 'writing plan' for the text. The plan should be a simple guide to help the students remember the sequence of the writing to be done, and can also remind the students about language features to include. The writing plan will draw on the focus questions used in the high order orientation, and often provide the beginning of clauses, including the conjunctions used to connect clauses in a complex sentences, such as *but, as if,* and so on. For example a writing plan for reconstructing the first paragraph of *Good Tip for Ghosts* might take the form of the following.

how far away? where?,

how sure? I heard a noise.

Pete was looking **where?**

I was **how scared?**

I wanted to _____.

but my legs _____.

I opened _____.

but _____.

Pete _____.

as if he was _____.

At this point in the reconstruction the student's familiarity with the text becomes apparent. The work done during book orientation initially enabled the students to read the text, now it will provide writing support. The teacher will need to remind the students of earlier discussions or have them again. The students may remember the text exactly. They do not have to remember the whole text parrot fashion, however,

but the teacher will want them to remember the sequence of the narrative and much of the literary language you want the students to take over. Good writers borrow from other written texts constantly and have developed from their reading a range of resources they can draw on when writing. Because of this they are able to also develop the flexibility to be 'creative' and invent their own unique style. However, learners without resources cannot be creative because they do not know what they are expected to 'create'. Therefore they must be allowed to borrow the actual words of familiar texts and understand why they are doing this.

The teacher now uses the writing plan to assist the students to say what they are going to write. This is an important step. It is not enough to assume that because the teacher has discussed or pointed out the literary language and made a plan, the students will be able to write it. Typically, weak writers tend to fall back on their habitual methods of writing to produce a product that counts as a 'good try' if they are under any overload. Once the students are completely certain of how to say what they are going to write, they choose the method of writing and write. There are three options which provide increasing levels of support. The least supportive is for the students to write independently. This option would be chosen if the teacher was sure the students were absolutely confident of the content and could spell many of the words of the text correctly. The next option is to use a 'shortwrite'. This strategy involves the teacher and students both writing at the same time. It provides support because the students can take from the teacher's writing anything they forgot or want to change. The most supportive option is to use dictated writing, in which the teacher writes what the students dictate. There is the flexibility with this strategy for the students to write parts of the text while the teacher writes the rest. This can be done with a whole class on the whiteboard.

Once the writing is finished, the students re-read the completed text. The teacher praises them for taking on the language of the author and reminds them of why it was important to do this. The writing is compared with the model text and students check whether any changes need to be made. Once they are able to reconstruct a text in the way described above, their detailed knowledge of this text can be built on by using it for Text Patterning. Text patterning is a strategy where students use the model text as support for organising the structure of the text, and for learning how to use resources that writers employ to make their writing literate rather than like oral language. The procedure for text patterning includes the following steps:

- The teacher explains to the class that they are going to use the text they have just reconstructed as a pattern for a text of the their own.
- A writing plan is jointly constructed. It is important to develop an overall plan and discuss what information needs to be included in the orientation and complication to bring about a satisfactory resolution.
- The original story is used as a pattern.

- Writing begins using dictated writing, shortwrites or independent writing, depending on the amount of support needed. Writing is done for short periods at a time.
- The plan and model text are referred to as students write, and the teacher reminds them of the language choices that the author of the model used in their writing.
- The text is re-read and any changes that need to be made are discussed. The teacher makes positive comments about how the students used the language resources modelled by the author. When the writing is completed it can be presented attractively, and can also be used as a resource for reading and spelling for students.

Before text patterning on *Good Tip for Ghosts*, few students in the classes we worked with had ever written texts above Profile Level 2. A typical student was Grant, currently in Year 8 high school. Before beginning the Scaffolding work with his class, Grant's independent writing consisted entirely of recounts or observation-comments at Level 2, exemplified by the following (Text 6), written after a year of 'bridging' intended to prepare him for entry to mainstream high school. It is an edited final draft.

Text 6 Going Hunting by Grant

> In the holidays I went back to my land we always go hunting in the car and we shot one kangaroo. Then we cooked the kangaroo in the fire and ate some of the meat and we took the rest of the meat to my family. After that we went back to Ernabella then I went sleep and in the morning I had breakfast and went to the shop. I bought chips and sprite then went back to my house and watched a video about the running man, then I switched the video off and put a computer game in and played on the game. It was good to play and I had fun.

While the subject matter of Text 6 illustrates something of the diversity of Grant's everyday experience in a changing culture, it could hardly be described as a coherent story, in terms of either indigenous or western traditions. It falls somewhere in between, generated out of neither cultural tradition, but rather from the dysfunctional contexts of writing activities in community schools. Although it represents the outcome of Grant's seven or eight years of schooling, it certainly does not display the literacy skills he needs to participate successfully in secondary school, at any of the levels we have been discussing, of subject matter, text organisation, discourse sequences, grammar features or lexical choices. In contrast, the following (Text 7) was written by Grant following a Scaffolding sequence with his class, using *Good Tip for Ghosts*. The first paragraph was written jointly with the whole class, with each student taking turns to write a contribution on the board. The remainder Grant wrote independently, using a writing plan constructed jointly with the class.

Text 7 The Scary Cemetery by Grant

Close by under some old broken gravestones, I thought I heard a scary sound. Ethan was staring at the gravestones too. I was so scared I was shaking. I wanted to hide but I couldn't see a tree in the dark. I opened my mouth to shout but my tongue wouldn't work.

It was a soft, crying noise. It sounded like someone who was terribly sad. It was coming our way. I just stood there staring in the direction of the crying. I wished I could cover the moon so that I would be invisible. The crying grew louder. It was coming towards us.

Then we saw it. Or him. Or whatever it was. An old woman with a bent broom. She was sweeping a floor, looking for something. She was walking slowly towards us. She was carrying her dirty old broom and in the other hand she had a dust pan. Ethan and I noticed it the same time. She didn't touch the ground. She was floating above the ground. She was moving across the gravestones about thirty centimetres above the ground.

We both shouted the word in the same time "Lets run". And then we ran. We ran through the gravestones. Scrambling. Screaming. Scrabbling. Not noticing the slithering snakes going out of our way. Not even looking back at the gravestones. Not daring to stop and turn and look at the old woman.

Finally I found a gravestone with a door open. So we crawled into the grave. It had no coffin and fresh air, so we sat down. Not talking, not laughing, not even thinking. Why have we come to this horrible cemetery? Silly. Silly. Silly.

In this first step in text patterning, Grant has chosen to stay fairly close to the original story. He has used the wording of the Paul Jennings text for support, where he felt it necessary, but has also felt confident enough to depart from it significantly, in subject matter, and language choices. In further steps in text patterning, he will rapidly become more familiar with the process of writing from a plan, and become confident enough to take risks with new stories. Considering the level at which Grant was writing previously *The Scary Cemetery* was a remarkable achievement.

Scaffolding factual texts

Narrative is a useful starting point for scaffolding indigenous students up to their appropriate level, because it is a genre that is familiar in their oral experience, and is an enjoyable entry point for exploring new or imaginary realms of experience. However learning to read and write factual texts is also crucial to exploring the new worlds of science, society and environment, and other curriculum areas. As we mentioned above, there are very few students from remote communities producing factual texts that are recognisable as reports or explanations, right up to junior secondary levels. The following is a writing sample produced by a Year 10 student at Wiltja, following a lesson in which the field of goannas was discussed, from the perspective of both the students experience and biology, resource texts were read with the class, and the structure of science reports was modelled.

Text 8 Goannas by Craig

Goannas are native animals that live in isolated place and they are reptiles

Goannas look as same as area where they live in. They camouflage their self with the area their colour looks like yellowish-brown and they eat insect and dead animals

Goannas breed about six eggs

Aboriginals hunt goannas for food and the fat inside the goannas are used for medicine.

Because it followed intensive discussion of the field, and modelling of the structure of science reports, Text 8 is above what this student was normally producing, which was no more than simple recounts that would be classified at Profile Levels 2-3. However it is still well behind what is required of Year 10 students, who should be writing at Profile Level 8 to matriculate to senior secondary school. Writing of this text was followed by a scaffolding sequence taught by a teacher at Wiltja over fifteen half hour lessons, spanning six weeks. First the class learned to fluently read and reconstruct a Profile Level 4 science report on goannas, using the same reading preparation, spelling and text reconstruction strategies described above for *Lion and the Mouse*. This report is reproduced below as Text 9

Text 9 Goannas from Barry Silkstone (1997)

Australia is home to 25 of the world's 30 monitor lizard **species.** In Australia, monitor lizards are called goannas.

Goannas have flattish bodies, long tails and strong jaws. They are the only lizards with forked tongues, like a snake. Their necks are long and may have loose folds of skin beneath them. Their legs are long and strong, with sharp claws on their feet. Many goannas have stripes, spots and other markings that help to **camouflage** them.

All goannas are daytime hunters. They run, climb and swim well. The largest species can grow to more than two metres in length.

Goannas hunt small mammals, birds and other reptiles. They also eat dead animals. Smaller goannas eat insects, spiders and worms.

Male goannas fight with each other in the **breeding season**. Females lay between two and twelve eggs.

Once they were confidently reconstructing the report at this level, the students were much better prepared to read resource texts at their own age level, within the same general field. This is because they were learning to manipulate the kinds of language features expected in science reports, such as:

- Staging of reports in animal classification of General Classification (first paragraph), Appearance (second paragraph), and Behaviour (remaining paragraphs).
- Sequence in Appearance stage from body shape through body parts, and in Behaviour stage from hunting to breeding.
- Clauses that express 'are' and 'have' relations by which science describes and classifies phenomena (most of the clauses in Text 9).
- Complex nominal groups that describe phenomena, such as *...flattish bodies, long tails and strong jaws, ...stripes, spots and other markings that help to camouflage them, ...more than two metres in length,* and so on.
- Technical terms, like *monitor lizards, species, breeding season* (for more detail about the language of school science see Wignell, Martin & Eggins 1993, Rose 1997).

In the process of learning to manipulate these language features, the students had learnt crucial information about how science classifies species taxonomies, and about how a science report in this field classifies and describes an animal. The next step was

then to provide scaffolding for students to read a Profile Level 7 reference text on goannas, in order to get more detailed information on goannas, written in more elaborate forms. This information was then used to elaborate their reconstructed reports, as the Text Patterning stage of the scaffolding sequence. The product was a new text that each student had constructed for themselves on the scaffold provided by the reconstructed report.

In the next phase more scaffolding activities were conducted on high level reference texts about Komodo Dragons, another type of monitor lizard that the students were intensely interested in. The final stage was for each student to produce new texts independently on Komodo Dragons. The following, Text 6, is the first draft of a report produced by Craig, the author of Text 4 just six weeks previously.

Text 10 Final Report by Craig (first draft)

The largest of all the lizards would be the Komodo Dragon which has a strong body and also a long tail. The Komodo Dragon has scales all over its body and can grow to ten feet long. The Komodo Dragon has a very visible earhole and you can see their nostrils on the end of their snout. The Komodo Dragon has the same tongue like the goanna in Australia, the tongue is forked like a snake. The Komodo Dragon has teeth, less than an inch long which is covered by spongy gum.

The Komodo Dragon is an Einstein of its own world of reptiles. The Komodo Dragon knows that he has caught food before in an area where there are animals. The Komodo Dragon ambushes its prey, the dragon knows that there is a goat or a deer coming towards him. The way the dragon knows is because it has its tongue sticking out of its mouth. When the animal gets close to the dragon, the dragon does not show a sign of excitement.

The dragon has six-sense which is a combination of smell and taste. When the Komodo Dragon sticks its tongue out, the chemical on the goat or the deer is collected by the tongue. Then the chemical from the goat or deer drops down to the pond, then information is sent to the brain. The Komodo Dragon then catches the prey and kills the prey. If the dragon bites the prey then it dies in a different way, which is poison from the dragon bite. If the dragon gets its prey it bites its throat and shakes crazily, and then it swallows its prey. The dragon swallows its prey helped by thick gobs of spit. The Komodo Dragon coughs out anything it can't eat, like the horns or fur.

The Komodo Dragon eats once a month and eats incredible mounds of food. It takes several weeks to digest.

This remarkable flowering of factual writing skills demonstrates the potential of Indigenous students like Craig to read, write and achieve at the appropriate levels for their years. Despite this potential, Craig's class group had never written texts like this before because they had not been previously taught to read at their year levels, nor how to use the literate resources from their reading, in order to write successfully.

The scaffolding strategies outlined above offer the opportunities that indigenous students are asking for to read and write at their year levels. They are not an instant panacea, but require consistent application within a curriculum framework that is properly sequenced and paced to enable students to make rapid, but realistic progress. Currently we have found, like Malcolm, M. Christie and Folds, that this kind of systematic programming and focused teaching is a rarity in indigenous community schools, where the majority of students' literacy levels are so out of kilter with the mainstream curriculum goals for their years. In contrast the rapid improvements attainable with scaffolding strategies enable teachers to set clear academic targets for their indigenous students, and program and teach to these goals.

The schools we are working with have clearly demonstrated that the scaffolding literacy approach can achieve remarkable results for indigenous students, if they are carefully and consistently applied. They are not difficult for teachers to take on, but they do require a serious commitment at the levels of classroom practice, curriculum planning and school management to be successful. This means that teachers and management in indigenous schools must be able and willing to alter the current focus on behaviour management and on keeping students busy with non-productive activities, including ritualised activities such as individual reading of low level picture readers and endless recycling of simple recounts in personal writing activities. We need to think carefully about how to build literacy learning into each curriculum area, and how to select texts for reading and writing that will enable students to engage successfully with the curriculum at each stage of their primary and secondary schooling. This is already beginning to happen in the schools we are working with, in all classes from Year 1 to Year 10. From starting positions with literacy documented in Figure 1 and 2, these students are already reading and producing texts that are more appropriate for their years, and will have a much better chance of succeeding in primary and secondary schooling than they or their teachers previously imagined possible. We have no doubt that given adequate support and commitment, the scaffolding literacy approach can enable indigenous students throughout Australia to achieve the same levels of success in education that other Australians consider their right.

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CHAPTER 4

Literacy Teaching and Learning in a Bilingual Classroom

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Maningrida, Arnhem Land

Opening statement

This chapter outlines some of the literacy practices experienced and created by an upper-primary bilingual class and their teachers in Maningrida, Arnhem Land (Marrchila Class: Maningrida CEC (Manayingkarríra). It is based on the premise that a successful literacy program is an ongoing process reliant on good planning and evaluation practices.

Focus

As teachers of this class, we decided that to discuss only English literacy practices would not sufficiently tell our story of literacy learning practices and experiences in a bicultural, bilingual context. Within this chapter, a variety of themes are discussed: the school setting, the desires of community members, the children, the teachers, planning techniques and classroom routines, vernacular literacy practices, and finally some of the language and literacy practices developed throughout the duration of a particular unit of work in English.

A brief overview of Maningrida school structures is outlined in the following introduction.

Introduction: school setting

Maningrida school ranges from pre-school to high school with 13 homeland schools administered through the base school. The secondary section offers three courses: Intensive English, Foundation Studies and General Studies, approved by the Northern Territory Board of Studies as special category curriculum for secondary aged Indigenous students who have an ESL/EFL background. These courses are the result of requests by Aboriginal communities for community based education. Students can enrol in the Northern Territory Correspondence School for years 8 -12, via computer/modem lessons with a teacher based in Darwin. Further tutoring is offered within the base school to complement the students' learning. There is RATE (Remote Area Tertiary Education) through a Batchelor College facility at Maningrida school campus and student teachers are accommodated in appropriate classrooms during their practicums. When the students qualify as teachers, suitable teaching positions and structures are discussed and organised to cater for the new graduates and all other school staff. The school works towards fulfilling community aspirations and supports the process of Aboriginalisation/ localisation.

In the early days of schooling in Maningrida, before the school was equipped to support the teaching of local vernacular languages, English was the language taught and used in classes. Today there are three main languages formally taught in Maningrida school: Ndjébbana, the language spoken by the traditional land owners; Burarra, the language spoken by a large group of people who live in Maningrida and homelands to the east; and English as a first, second and foreign language. The step model approach described below has been used in the school since the bilingual program was introduced in 1974.

When children first come to school at pre-school level, 5% of their school time is conducted in English usually through singing, stories and instructions. In the first 3-4 years of formal schooling the use of English increases from 10% to about 40%: an oral language program with some informal literacy with the older students takes place during these years. Students are not introduced to English literacy formally until about their fifth year of school. This model was adopted based on the theory of the day on bilingual education, which said that first language knowledge was transferable to the learning of English. The transference theory is no longer the main reason for continuing a bilingual model in the school. Education in both Aboriginal languages and English is considered to be of great value in the struggle for self determination by future generations within the community.

Although there have always been mutli-age classes and team teaching in our school, the staff decided that these approaches warranted more formal attention. The school opened up discussion through workshops, inservices and sharing sessions. It provided an opportunity for further professional development of staff members. With many Aboriginal teachers coming on board in 1997, evaluation of class and school structures as well as classroom practices became a necessary and significant whole

school project. It was time to look at how multi-age and team teaching situations could best cater for the community's aspirations for successful 'both ways' education.

The Walking Talking Text model for teaching English Oracy and Literacy was first trialled in the school by early childhood teachers in 1996. This curriculum document was developed and written by Fran Murray originally as Walkin' Talkin' Stories and in 1995 was rewritten in its current form with support and approval by the Northern Territory Board of Studies. Its practices, methodologies and planning structures satisfied our school's requirements for a more structured and uniform approach to teaching English. This approach has been endorsed by the school 's Mabárnad Márro Manayingkarrira Languages Policy.

Currently, there are five Aboriginal teachers at Maningrida School who teach within different team situations. In some cases two classes have been combined, with two teachers and one or more teaching assistants working together. This has allowed several opportunities for teachers to support each other. In some cases, a first language speaker of English has teamed with a first language speaker of an Aboriginal language. This is the situation in Marrchila class with Lily, Colleen and Rhoda.

The children

In Marrchila class the students range from 8 years to 13 years old. A multi-age and team teaching approach has worked well with this group. The teaching team consists of two qualified teachers, Lily and Colleen, and Rhoda, an AEW (Aboriginal Education Worker). This structure lends itself to the development of strong learning practices within a supportive and encouraging environment. In 1997 the enrolment for this class stood at 52.

Although this group of students are taught in Burarra as their first language, and most are fluent Burarra speakers, Burarra is not the first language for a number of these students. Some of the students have one of the following: Djinang, Gurrgoni, Gupapuyngu, Nakara, Maung, Rembarrnga, Kune, Ndjébbana, Gun-artpa as their first language. All students in this group started school with little knowledge or understanding of English.

Within our target group, approximately one third of the students had previously been in a non-bilingual class established for predominantly casual attenders, including those who move between their homeland centres and Maningrida. Although these students can communicate in the Burarra language, it is not their first language. On entering Marrchila class, these students experienced their first year of Burarra literacy.

Another third of our students have recently come to our class from early childhood classes. They are beginning English literacy formally for the first time. All these students have been learning in, about and through Burarra and have participated in an oral English program in their early childhood education. Some of the students

entered this class at the beginning of the school year and about eight commenced in the second semester.

The last third of the students have been part of the original class for at least one year and some for 3 years. (One of the teachers has taught in Marrchila class for 2 .5 years.) This group of students has an important role in 'training' the new students on classroom routines and learning behaviours. Students need to understand how to operate in their school/classroom environment. Without this understanding children cannot take the shared responsibility for their own learning, cannot make choices about what resources and materials are available to them and learn in different situations; whole class, groups, on their own and one to one.

Nearly all the students at some time, before they start school and during their schooling, suffer health problems which will affect their learning. One of the main health problems is impaired hearing caused by Otitis Media. It is difficult to estimate how many children have delayed language learning caused by hearing impairment. Health and Education workers are beginning to realise the enormous problems faced by many of the students. There is support for teachers and students from Student Services and the Hearing Program. Often students' problems are not diagnosed early enough, before they start school or in their early years of school. There is more information now for teachers especially on hearing impairment and learning and appropriate strategies have been developed to use with the students.

The lives of most of these students could not be further from the culture of school. The majority of community members want their children to be good at speaking their first language and English. They have also expressed the need for their children to be competent in mathematics. Only a handful of students from each class could be considered as regular attenders. For teachers, continuity of learning requires the use of many strategies and the constant searching for better ways to ensure all students have the maximum opportunity to learn.

Many students spend time in other communities and homelands from a week to 6 months or more at a time. The school views the ceremonial obligations of the students as part of their education and in doing so, acknowledges and promotes two way schooling.

The use of English in the community is not widespread: it may be used to communicate with Balanda, listened to on television and used as a lingua franca for some people of different language groups. Many adults and some children in this community are multilingual. Knowledge of kinship and how we are related to each other is very important when teaching the students and working with Aboriginal adults. Most of the students know how they are related to a great number of people within the community and beyond, and are able to work out their relationship with others new to them. The building of appropriate and supportive relationships between the students and their teachers is of paramount importance to the learning process: students will not take risks unless they feel 'safe and happy' within the class environment. Balanda teachers working in this bicultural-bilingual context should

constantly review their teaching-learning practices and philosophies on education. Now that Aboriginal people are graduating as teachers and working in their own communities, they are able to support the development of more successful classroom environments, which often leads to team teaching situations.

Literacy profile of target group

Within this class, there are about eight children who are capable and budding readers/writers. These particular children have developed mature reading and writing strategies, such as risk taking, predicting, forward and backward referencing, use of picture, grapho-phonic, semantic, and syntactic cues and reading for meaning across the whole text.

The rest of the children in this class are beginning readers. They are all in the process and at different stages of developing the above mentioned reading skills. Within this group there are about 6 children who have had at least one years exposure to learning experiences which promote these reading/writing skills. The remaining children are in the initial stages of developing positive attitudes and understandings of what reading is:

> "understanding something via print
> enjoyable, purposeful and meaningful
> more than recognising isolated words
> more than adding bits and pieces in a linear fashion"
> (adapted from Hood and Solomon, 1985)

The English as a Second Language, an Outcomes Profile for NT Schools, was used to determine the students' language levels in the four macro skills. Students in this class range from Beginning Level 1 (ESBR01) to Level 3 (ESRE03) in reading and writing, Level 3 (ESLI03) to Level 5 (ESLI05) in Listening and Level 2 (ESSP02) to Level 4 (ESSP04) in Speaking. The profiles have helped us to map what students can do in these four areas.

As yet there are no profiles for Aboriginal languages as first languages. The school is planning to develop a Burarra profile starting in 1998.

The teachers

Lily's Story

I was born at Gamarra Gu-yurra homeland on the mainland near Yurrwi, Milingimbi. My parents and relatives were "gathered up" in a big truck and brought to Maningrida. I grew up in Maningrida.

At school we were not allowed to speak our own language, Burarra. We were only

allowed to speak English. When I left school I did some work experience, then moved back to Gamarra Gu-yurra in 1975. I went to the beach at Gu-mukgumuk and went by boat to Yurrwi (Milingimbi). I stayed there for a long time. I went back to Gamarra Gu-yurra to teach in the homeland school and started RATE (Remote Area Teacher Education) in 1986.

In 1988 my family moved back to Maningrida because we had difficulty obtaining supplies. I did my second year of teacher education. In 1991 I became an assistant teacher in the pre-school half way through the year. They asked me to teach but I had a little boy and had to take him with me.

I started my third year of teacher education in 1992 and did not finish it until 1996. I had so many things to do: look after my children, my parents, relatives. I stopped teaching and studying for nearly four years. In 1996 I began work as an assistant teacher and studied part time. I worked with one teacher then they just changed me to work with another teacher. Nobody told me why, it just happened. Maybe it was because the teacher who was Colleen did not have an assistant teacher and Colleen needed a Burarra person to teach the children. Colleen was very happy to work with me.

For my study I had to finish my practicums. I would get very nervous about working and studying and finishing my pracs. The first unit I planned in my prac, was one on Galgu (flying fox). I did the teaching, but Colleen and I planned the lessons together and we shared ideas.

Colleen had made very tiny books with children. They all had one each and we did the same for the Burarra unit. We made small books on Galgu. The children loved them.

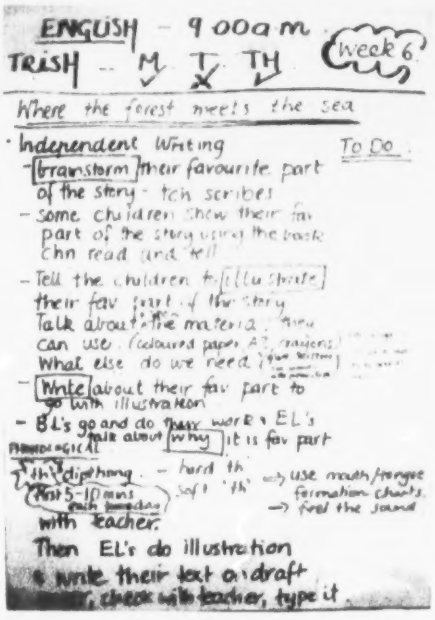
I started to learn how to keep the lesson folder and programs organised. It made me feel good that Colleen was sharing these things with me. I planned with other teachers but I did not know where the information came from: I was never shown. Colleen and I would plan together and she would show me where she got the information from and why she was using it. On my prac Colleen kept encouraging me and slowly I started to feel comfortable about teaching. I would always look at the lesson plan and have to keep looking back at the lesson steps.

One of the most important things I learnt was about 'time' when you are teaching. You have to use your time properly and give children a chance to finish and time to change over lessons and time to pack up. Sometimes if the children are working really hard and well the lesson can go longer and sometimes when the lesson is not going well we can change and do something else we planned.

When I am reading a text with the children, sometimes some of the children tease each other. When Colleen and I teach together then she sits with the children and joins in and the children don't tease. At first the children did not behave for me all the time. They would not listen and sometimes they were laughing or fighting but not working. This was hard for me. Colleen told me that I was their teacher and that I had to be firm with them and tell them how I want them to behave. Now I feel very strong with the children, the children respond now and don't muck around. When they do

muck around I use different strategies to change their behaviour and it is working.

I really like planning with butcher's paper. We put it on the wall and can look at it any time. When something is too hard or I can't remember what it means I can just point to it and say "What's this mean?" and it gets explained. We can make changes together.


ENGLISH - 9.00am
TRISH -- M ✓ T ✗ TH ✓
week 6
Where the forest meets the sea
• Independent Writing
- Brainstorm their favourite part of the story - tch scribes
- some children show their fav part of the story using the books chn read and tell
- Tell the children to [illustrate] their fav part of the story
Talk about the materials they can use. (coloured paper A3, crayons)
What else do we need? (pencils)
- Write about their fav part to go with illustration
- EL's go and do their work & EL's talk about why it is fav part
To Do
PHONOLOGICAL
th digraph - hard th soft 'th' => use mouth/tongue formation charts. => feel the sound
(first 5-10 mins each morning)
with teacher.
Then EL's do illustration & write their text on draft
check with teacher, type it

We, the Teacher Linguist Rachel, Rhoda our AEW, myself and Colleen plan our Burarra around a topic. We think of what is relevant to the children and what they should be learning. At the beginning of the year we planned a unit on Garnabibi. Garnabibi is about the winds and the wet season and how they change the environment, plants and animals and the significance of Garnabibi to people.

We classified the fish into their moieties (a system of dividing the world into two parts, permitting people, animals, ceremonies etc to be allocated into one or the other part, each having certain responsibilities and obligations) and named them and where they lived. Many of the children did not know the names of the fish. They just called them jichicha, the generic name for fish. Also, during this time an older man Ganyjibala came into our class each day to show and teach some of the boys how to paint. He asked them their totem but some did not know, he was surprised. Most of the children who spend some time in the homelands know these things but children who live in Maningrida do not know as much. I talked to the Aboriginal staff at Yŭyabol, about how we should be teaching more about Gurrutu (Kinship) so children will know their Aboriginal name and not just always use their Balanda name.

Earlier in the year we went on an excursion for both our Burarra topic on *Garnabibi* and for our Maths *Space and Position in the Environment*. The children were told special stories about the Garnabibi season by a traditional owner for the place we were camping. Our maths topic was explored through viewing and sketching exercises. Some of the children spotted a turtle so we caught the turtle and we used this experience of preparing and cooking the turtle for our next Burarra unit. Wherever possible and appropriate, we use shared life experiences for the basis of and for extension of units of work.

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The crocodile (marrchila) is very important to Burarra people and this was our next unit in class. We had also planned to extend the Space and Position in the Environment unit during this time and it was decided to integrate aspects of each of the topics. The Burarra story which tells about where the crocodile went through Arnhem Land linked in well with space and position. The crocodile is our ancestor and I wanted the children to know it's importance to us and the land. I can introduce myself to other people and tell about my totem and they will know me and that I am one of their parts of their family.

The children learnt about the crocodile's life cycle, from the egg to an adult and the influence of the seasons on its life. We went to the beach near the school to see the crocodile tracks and to the billabong nearby where the crocodile lays its eggs amongst the reeds. Earlier in the year the children had been studying Life cycles as an English unit of work.

I used my brother's bark painting to tell the story about Marrchila. I was told the story and then I told it to the children. The children's language and literacy learning was based on the text types that emerged from the unit. We retell events that have happened and write them down. We wrote a group negotiated text on the bark painting. We made up a poem about marrchila. We read books already produced about marrchila. We made our own book. We used posters with labels on them.

In previous times, a lot of Burarra was taught through phonics, learning words and writing sentences based on a premade book. Now we are teaching in a different way. We include lots of cultural information knowledge important for the children and the phonics is part of the whole unit not the whole lot. It is not the same way as we do Walking Talking Texts for English.

We plan with the Burarra teacher linguist and literacy worker and they produce resources we need to teach the topic. We can't get these resources out of a book. We have to go and ask people who have the knowledge to help us. My husband knows how to cut up turtle the proper way and who to give different parts to, so he did that job. He showed and explained all of this to the children. We took photos and wrote texts to accompany the photos.

Children need to know about the things we have taught them, before they grow up. They need to be able to read and write in their own language as well as English. I think there should more use of languages other than English in the community, like signs around the place, the use of television for different languages. We need to record our stories and other things because some are being lost.

When we are teaching in the class together, even when we are teaching English, I can help the children more by explaining concepts, ideas and words used in English to them in Burarra. It helps them to understand the English and we can learn about more difficult things. I can tell them what we want in Burarra and then scaffold their English when they talk. The children feel comfortable with this way, they don't get frustrated and switch off; they stay interested and will contribute to the lesson.

At the shop I can talk to a Ndjébbana speaker in Burarra and the reply will be in

Ndjébbana and we can understand each other. I don't speak Ndjébbana but I can understand it. I can speak Maringa Burarra, Yanh'nangu, Yolngu Matha and Djinang and English. I can also understand Kuninjku but I don't speak it.

Our school should have a boat, so we can show children how to hunt animals from the sea and we could have access to other places.

We should always work in teams, with another teacher and an assistant teacher. If we work together with other teachers we can share our ideas and learn from each other. I do not feel confident teaching on my own just yet. I like to teach English with a Balanda teacher. I can teach Burarra and the Balanda teacher can learn Burarra and help me with other areas of teaching.

Colleen's Story

Before coming to Maningrida, the majority of my teaching experience had been in mainstream schools in Victoria and Tasmania, apart from a wonderful two year teaching experience in an Aboriginal bilingual school in Western Australia. The challenge of teaching in a bilingual class developed in me a fascination and interest I had not previously experienced in my teaching career. When it came time to update my career credentials, I chose to study TESOL units as part of my Bachelor of Education. I began teaching in Maningrida midway through 1995, in the class being discussed in this paper, Marrchila class, upper primary, bilingual. The studies I had undertaken were of great value and relevance to this teaching position. Past experience, with all primary aged children, and knowledge of programming techniques etc, were also 'called upon' in the challenge of creating with the children and AEW 's of this class, a positive learning environment.

Lily was the first Aboriginal assistant teacher I had worked with who was really interested in talking about teaching and learning strategies, children's development, and the evaluation of teaching technique, programs and classroom management. We shared the joy of seeing children learning. We would tell stories about the children: what they had done during the day and how they were progressing.

It had taken Lily a long time to finish her studies. At the time I met her, she had only two practicums to complete before finishing her Associate Diploma of Teaching. Lily decided to complete the two pracs with me in Marrchila class. She said she felt comfortable working with this class.

We used an integrated approach to programming, everything we were doing came together more naturally this way. We would develop areas that both the children and teachers were interested in, and in doing so create authentic life experiences and texts, in this way the writing and discussion of the teaching and planning process had real purpose. Together Lily and I were discovering the whole picture of planning, teaching, assessing, reflecting and evaluating. We could see how the teaching and learning process is interrelated, and through critical discussion, we could further develop appropriate strategies for the teaching-learning process of our class.

Lily's enthusiasm and interest affected and lifted me. I wanted to support her as

much as possible. As a Burarra speaker Lily was able to support and encourage the children in ways that I could not. She could joke easily with the children and they laughed together. She would remark on something a child had said or done which I never would have noticed. Lily was always amazed at what the children could do and she gave the children confidence in their own abilities. Working together and later as a teaching team we were able to complement each other as well as share our knowledge, experience and expertise.

Lily's wealth of knowledge became apparent as she started to make decisions about what should be taught in Burarra and how it should be taught. We were moving away from a word attack/phonics approach to an integrated approach, incorporating phonics as only part the whole program.

Going on excursions and tapping into the knowledge of people in the community who would sometimes come and teach the children, enabled us to produce relevant and purposeful texts that could be further explored and utilized for development of both linguistic and cultural knowledge. Within this framework the children and teachers interest and enthusiasm ran high and everything came together more naturally. We always try to give the children real life experiences and use their prior knowledge – similar to Brian Gray's Concentrated Language Encounters (Northern Territory Department of Education, 1985).

We worked on the following premise when developing our units of work:

Literacy:

Definition: Literacy involves the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking; it incorporates numeracy. It includes the cultural knowledge which enables a speaker, reader or writer to recognise and use language appropriate to different situations.
(IYL Paper No.1, ESL in Anangu Schools, 1993)

Rationale: The belief that: we learn about our world through language and that in turn, language is learnt through the learning of- making sense in our world; is the premise from which the bilingual Burarra-English literacy programs for Upper primary will develop in term 1 1997.

Approach: the literacy programs in this class will develop primarily out of shared learning experiences; either real life or shared literacy experiences.

This approach depends on the natural interrelatedness of listening , speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking as well as the integration of other relevant curriculum areas.

(taken from Colleen's and Lily's teaching program)

In one of her practicums Lily developed a unit on *sound* as part of a bigger unit of work on *music*. She had to make materials relevant to the topic. None of the commercially produced materials really suited what was required, so we found pictures in magazines, used parts of other worksheets and wrote our own texts to produce relevant worksheets. Lily at this stage, had not realised that the production of relevant materials to match what the children are learning is possible through the collection of and adaptation of a variety of sources. It seemed to be part of this "secret knowledge' that couldn't be broken into: how relevant resources are made. Often they just appear, but rarely is there any explanation or modelling of how they are made and developed for a specific purpose. Nearly all of the written applications we use in the classroom are made by us. There is no doubt that children learn more easily if there are appropriate resources each time. Often this requires a commitment to staying back after school and getting the resources ready.

When the little books, big books, worksheets, games, bingo cards, flashcards, cloze charts, audio tapes etc are made for the children to reinforce the language learning in the classroom, the results from the children show the merit in spending extra time producing them. Lily could see the relevance of using appropriate resources and how important they were to the teaching learning process. I could see her confidence growing as she began to see the limitlessness of what could be created and achieved in the classroom context.

With this wave of renewed enthusiasm Lily successfully completed her last two practicums. Placements for classroom positions for the following year were being discussed and put forward. Lily and I requested that we team teach in 1997. This request was supported and catered for in the rearrangements of class structures.

The beginning of the school year 1997 started in chaos for Lily and I. Two classes were combined to enable a team teaching class. Resources and furniture had to be moved to another location, along with a swag of sorting and cleaning tasks. Despite this disarray, we managed to plan and execute integrated units of work for Burarra, English and Mathematics.

In the following sections of this paper, I have set out to explain some of our class programs: the planning and development of them within our class setting.

Planning techniques and classroom routines

For our first topic in English we chose *Life Cycles*. There were a lot of resources we could adapt and use for this unit and the children had much interest and prior knowledge in this field. Children are very interested in natural science and we capitalised on this to further develop their skills and understanding of English. From the beginning of the year a positive learning environment was established.

The setting up of a new classroom environment was an appropriate way to start our venture into team teaching, especially as it was Lily's first teaching position as a new graduate. As time went by, the learning environment began to evolve. The resources were placed in various parts of the room, some to ensure children had access whenever they needed, others were put away for later use. All team members and children knew where all resources were kept. On Friday mornings we gave the children time to get to know the resources in the room. It is of little use to have grand materials and resources if the children and teachers do not know their purpose and how to use them. The children understood what was expected and took on the responsibility to ensure the class maintained a positive learning atmosphere. Any new children who started in the class at various times during the year settled in quickly and comfortably with the guidance of other students who knew the ways of their class environment. This organisation has been a vital factor in the usually smooth running of the class. A daily routine was established early on in the year.

We use every spare moment to plan and program; this includes reflecting on the day-week, evaluating our teaching, making resources and working on assessment issues.

During one of her 'release' hours, Lily usually planned Burarra units of work and resources with the teacher linguist- Rachel. One of our shared release hours was used to plan with Lily's mentor, Trish, and Rhoda our AEW. During this time, we would concentrate on developing integrated units of work in English. Other areas of the curriculum were looked at within this integrated framework. Assessment policy and techniques were also discussed and implemented during these sessions. As teachers for this class, we could share our knowledge and experiences in an open and honest way. It was through these sessions that Lily developed a familiarity with curriculum documents and pedagogical jargon. We would explore a variety of documents and resources in the process of planning our units of work and Lily's confidence grew as the idea of using such documents became less daunting. The concepts of 'learning outcomes' and 'assessment' to name only a couple, became more meaningful, the more we explored and discussed things together as a team. Many of our planning sessions took place after school, and as time went by these sessions became easier and more enjoyable.

Laurie, a student teacher, joined our team in term two for her Stage 3 practicum. The requirements of Laurie's prac and the short time to meet these requirements, taking into account other school commitments lead us to the idea of planning on large

DAILY PROFILE:

8.00am Each morning the children are a given a choice in a variety of literacy activities. These activities are labelled in the following way:

Individual Activities:
- listening post
- have-a-go writing-paper or computer
- silent/free time reading
- catch up literacy work from previous day

1 on 1: These activities are designed for intensive work between one child and one teacher. They include;
- phonological activities,
- revision /extension work with common sight words,
- sequencing, matching and reading of a text with the teacher – either well known or related to current topic.

Group: Two to four children work together on an activity designed for a shared Activities:
- negotiated text.
- sequencing
- cloze, answering questions
- sentence construction
- games-bingo, concentration, lucky dip, etc.

9.00 am Health Hustle (Physical Education program – sometimes occurs after recess)

9.30 am English- based on current unit of work

RECESS

10.45 Burarra – based on current unit of work

12.15 Maths – see program for detail.

LUNCH

Afternoons

Monday – Sport/Learning Together
Tuesday – Health
Wednesday – Music/Yúyabol Action group meeting and multilingual programming
Thursday – Multilingual Program/ Our planning time

sheets of paper which could be displayed and re-worked as the need arose. This seemed to be the most efficient and effective way of team planning. We discovered that working from individual planning chronicles often lead to misinterpretation and did not encourage collaboration and open planning required for successful programs. Our team teaching approach forced us to find better ways to write up our programs so that all the information was accessible to all of us at all times. The butcher's paper idea facilitated open discussion and honesty and it allowed the team to read things through together as a group and make appropriate changes along the way.

After Laurie's prac, Lily, Rhoda and I continued to plan in this way. We started putting our weekly and then daily plans on butcher's paper. It made sense to all members of the teaching team, including Lily's mentor who team taught with us in our English units of work, and the teacher linguist who assisted in the vernacular lessons. We stuck the butcher's paper to a pin- up board and read and talked about it and made changes each day and each week if necessary. It was easier to evaluate and there was input from everyone and nothing was hidden. We also used it with the children to show them that we also cross out and make changes to our writing and that this is an important part of the writing process. Sometimes we invited the students to share their ideas in the planning of class programs.

We continued to use an integrated approach in programming during Term 2. Keeping in mind the *Life cycles* unit of work we studied in Term 1, we decided that a unit of work on *Plants* would follow on naturally with the children's knowledge and fascination of food chains, webs and cycles involving plants and animals.

In the unit on plants, we focused on how plants grow and what helps them to grow: photosynthesis and the breathing cycle. We used children's prior knowledge and learning. We were not starting something totally new: new language, new context. We were able to build upon children's language and life experiences.

> The lesson went well. I wanted the children to use their own knowledge on what they have learnt about "plants". When it came to do the worksheet on leaves, I was amazed at some of the older children, like Kersey and Felicity writing their own words/sentences how plants can make food.
> I am overjoyed of what I have learnt from this class (Marrchila) about "The leaves breathing cycle" which tells me one of the subject I missed out during my school days. I couldn't stop talking about it for days to my friends, family and the children in Marrchila class, There are sometimes I feel like teaching the same lesson forever.
>
> THANKYOU MARRCHILA CLASS.

(Evaluation of Science lesson 2, 12/6/97, Laurie Guralayla, Batchelor College, Stage 3 Practicum. Taken from Manayingkarirra Djúrrang, June/July issue. 1997.)

Assessment

Because the planning process became easier for us in Term 2, we decided to focus on another area of concern: Assessment. (We seem to work in this way- focusing on some aspect of schooling each term.) We were very good at discussing the children's progress; individuals who had made a great leap or someone who seemed to be having difficulty, but how to record this information and reflect the learning outcomes was a task that needed to be thought through.

It was important for every teacher who taught in the room to be able to comment on the children's learning and anything they noticed, this included the teacher linguist, literacy worker, mentor and visiting teacher.

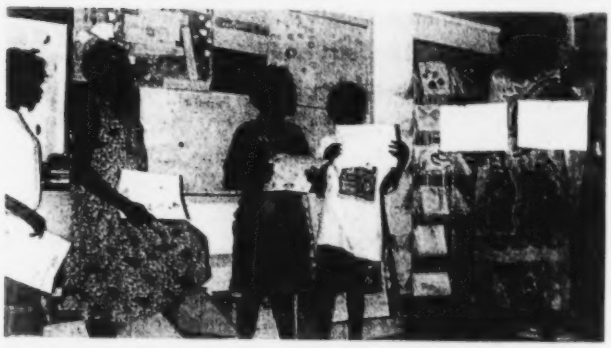
The large sheets of paper were put to use again to record assessment information about each child. We listed the outcomes on large sheets of paper with the children's names written down the side. This approach was used in all curriculum areas. The large sheets were attached to portable pin-up boards so that all team members and visiting teachers could write comments on them when necessary. The portability of the boards meant that they could be moved around and stored in the store room when not needed.

WTT- "Where the Forest Meets the Sea"

Names	Comments	Learning Outcomes
J	Group work- A _ writing, J tells where to put commas.	• record information in groups about rainforests
D	Favourite part- found words from group writing and wrote own text- first time!	• use knowledge of rain-forest issues to discuss and write about deforestation in the world.
L	Did the writing in group work-	• use prior knowledge of maps to read and interpret other maps
A	uses words - equator and destroy	• design and make own collage with write appropriate text to accompany it.
S	unable to locate places/ direction on map- not here for other map work done earlier this year	
D	has made an excellent start to collage- very careful details	

On the previous page, is an example of an assessment chart. Information for individual children were later transferred to A4 size, with the student's work attached for independent files.

We were confident in our planning and using the curriculum documents for our purposes, evaluating our teaching and assessing the children's learning. One of the greatest outcomes for the teachers was the realisation that anything is possible. The children showed interest in what they were doing and learning. The classroom environment was positive, we were enthusiastic and the children were responding.



Methodology

The use of the Walking Talking text model was gradually being formalised through the writing of a languages policy for our school.

Methodology is the way the teacher goes about teaching.
This involves:

- considering the students' backgrounds, prior knowledge and needs
- thinking about how students learn
- creating a good learning environment and setting up a well organised classroom
- planning and programming to decide what the students will learn and what the teachers will teach
- using appropriate and effective teaching/learning strategies
- using appropriate and effective assessment strategies

For new teachers to the school, the Do, Talk, Record, model is the preferred way to program in Burarra and Ndjébbana. The Walking Talking Text model is recommended for programs in English in the primary and early childhood sections. This promotes better programming and consistency in the primary and

early childhood sections as most aspects of literacy and language teaching and learning will be covered.

Assessment is clear as it focuses on the four macro skills (in the column planner) and assessment is part of the teaching/learning sequence.
Classes share programs and plan collaboratively where possible.
(Mabárnad Manayingkarrira Languages Policy, Draft, December 1997)

During a mentoring workshop held in Maningrida, two project officers from the Curriculum and Advisory Support Unit (CASU), took us through a Walking Talking Text (WTT) plan. It looked very good to Lily and I and not unlike the methodology and strategies we were using in our classroom. I could see a number of benefits in adopting this approach when working in a team situation. The ownership of the program is the teams, not just one persons way of programming. WTT provided the framework for good English learning strategies, its format is very appropriate for new teachers.

During this workshop we came across a particular WTT plan in the column format, written by two project officers from CASU based on the popular children's book: "Where the Forest Meets the Sea" by Jeannie Baker. We thought it most appropriate for our class and found the column planner very suitable for beginning and emerging literacy learners. The column format provides a lot of support for programming and encourages the integration of other appropriate documents. It is a basic outline which is filled in by detail specific to the unit.

Lily and I learnt about the format and planning of WTT together. We added our own ideas and made appropriate changes for our class situation. The use of the curriculum cycle developed from the Disadvantaged Schools Project in NSW fitted in well with the WTT plan for the development of successful group negotiated texts and individual writing activities. Factual texts are not as easy to plan for using WTT, but we were able to make appropriate changes. Most of our group negotiated texts, were used in our Morning Literacy program.

On borrowing the WTT unit on *Where The Forest Meets The Sea*, Lily and I added quite a lot to the original plan. Part of the reason for this was the momentum the unit took on as we went along. Although the unit was initially planned for term 3, aspects of its content: mainly conservation and preservation were carried over in Term 4 with the support of other resources: film, World Wide Web etc. It was an exciting learning time for both the teachers and children.

The following examples give an idea of how the unit of work was planned and how the teaching-learning process developed throughout.

Term 3. 1997. Term Overview.

Weeks 1-2: Review and consolidate Term 2's topic on 'Plants'- including negotiated texts.

Weeks 3-6: Introduce the story 'Where The Forest Meets The Sea'. **A Walking Talking Texts** unit of work.

- recounts, narratives.

Week 7: School Excursion; c!an groups to Homelands.

Weeks 8-10: Unit of work based on 'Back to Country' excursion.

- recounts, factual reports, procedural texts; 'How to catch goanna'.

Continue and round off Where The Forest Meets The Sea unit of work.

1 Brainstorm favourite parts of story with the chn
• Scribe what chn say • Scaffold & model into sentences

Younger chn B.L → Collage / crayons on A3
draw / illust & have-a-go at writing matching sentence of their favourite part - use / utilize brain storm words & sentences

Older chn E.L → extend above exercise by writing why it is their favourite part

INDEPENDENT WRITING

Teacher organises for the students to write, using the suggested writing sequence.

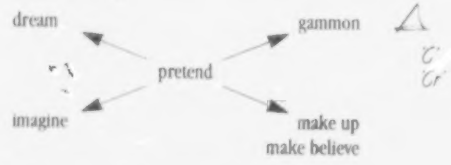
Once the list (point A, on the first page of this planner has been started, have students decided about what they will write/draw everyday before writing begins.

Do this in a group meeting and add to the list as ideas for personal writing grow.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

Activities

10. Make more semantic webs for words on the list in exercise 8 eg



Sort the words into categories eg:
- concept categories (forest words, sea words, water words, time words)
- words with same beginning sound
- all words with two/three syllables
- rhyming words (follow, hollow & then, again).

and coloured blocks

Thurs 11/8/97 wk 8

Teach the sound and letter combination for the 'th' diphthong. Teach and practice the difference between the hard (think) and soft (that) varieties.

'th' words in the text *(the, there, through, that, think, this, then, father)*.

Related texts to read to students each day:

Chn's simpler versions in English

Walking Talking Texts

Talking Book on computer

sentences into words using coloured blocks

younger chn give words from the story to match alphabet sounds
Single sounds

EXPLOITING THE TEXT

Exercises

A shaping exercise.

10. For students who are beginning literacy, introduce the English alphabet and display along a wall. Teach sound and letter names. List words under the appropriate letter name. Teach the sound/letter names, of single sounds, blends, word endings etc.

(A focusing exercise) older chn

For students who are developing literacy, create a wall dictionary (words with meanings) or a semantic web.

Add to the dictionary or semantic webs as unfamiliar words are encountered.

Teach the students how to use this as a resource for their personal writing. Use the growing list of words on these wall resources for the study of words including spelling, rules and irregularities in rules.

For example, students in pairs discuss and sort the words on individual cards into categories:
- word families
- same beginnings/endings
- sound patterns
- letter patterns
- rhyming words
- plurals etc.

make a deck of cards

"ad" "it" "at"

Morning Reading activity

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Overview for English unit "Where the forest Meets the Sea" Term 4 1997.

Week 1	Older children: Class excursion to Jabiru Peaks- outdoor adventure activities Younger children- continue with Forest topic based on film: Fern Gully
Weeks 2-5 whole class: class	Continue Term 3's unit of work on – Forests. Use story "The Forest" from Penan tribe in Malaysia found on the internet Conservation and preservation of forests. View film: The Emerald Forest- locate Brazil/ Amazon on our map. Comparative study on forest dwelling people of Malaysia and Brazil. Phonological activities based on individual copies of "The Forest" story Children continue to write in cooperative groups on the following: What we know about Rainforests and Why is it bad to cut all the forests down Children publish and present all information above for classroom display and class assembly. Older children: for Morning reading activities work on adventure camp excursion – recounts, labelling, answering questions, letter writing, etc.
Weeks 6/7	Diverge from main program and write letters to year 4 class in Melbourne who are doing Indigenous studies. prepare a scrapbook of information – photos, children's work etc.
Weeks 7-9	Making web pages about special trees in the community Mango trees – community meeting place – why is it special? Information on the mango tree, drawings, measurements, digital pictures. Jumbarrich – green plums. as for mango tree. Trish and Lily work with some older children using Claris Homepage. scanning drawings and typing in text. Children – group negotiated texts and independent writing.
Week 10	Show completed web site in class , chn have access to it. Write a group negotiated letter to Jeannie Baker.

A Walking Talking Text unit of work for Marrchila class terms 3 and 4. 1997

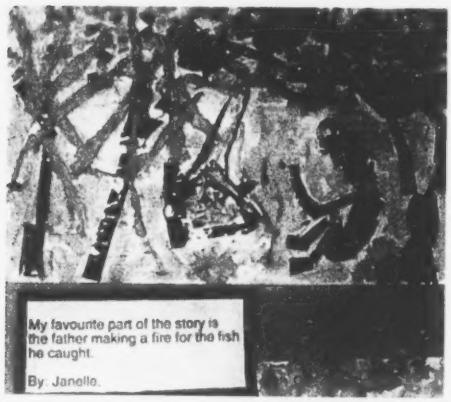
"Where the Forest Meets the Sea",
by Jeannie Baker, 1989. published by Walker Books, London.

Teaching - Learning Experiences:
Having shared the text with the class many times, we discussed the meaning of the story as well as our reactions and feelings towards it. The children responded joyfully to the illustrations in the book and in doing so encouraged a relaxed and natural approach to the sharing of ideas and thoughts about the story and related issues. A class negotiated thesaurus using various words and phrases in the text was co-constructed with the students in a joint attempt to make full meaning of the text and illustrations. A short negotiated text giving the children's opinion of the story was also co-constructed early in the learning cycle. An example follow.

> We like the story "Where the Forest Meets the Sea." The story is about a boy and his father who went by boat to look at the rainforest and go fishing. We like reading the story about the rainforest.
>
> We want the rainforest to stay like that.
> It is sad that the forest will turn into a city.
> The story is true. It was written by Jeannie Baker.

Soon after, the children created their own individual collages to match their favourite part of the story. The children's artistic creations enabled them to discover into the intricacies of the book's own beautiful 'collage' illustrations. Further comments were added to the original negotiated text as our reactions to the text developed.

On completion of their individual collages, an independent writing opportunity arose for the children to write about their favourite part of the story. The beginning writers were encouraged to write or copy a short sentence or a few chosen words and phrases related to the story. The more confident writers were encouraged to write about **why** they choose that part of the story as their favourite. On completion of their first draft, the children conferenced their writing with their teachers and then typed their final draft on the computer and printed it out. The final drafts were mounted on to coloured card and pinned alongside the children's collages. This display became an important addition to the class's reading material.



The text and illustrations of the book were copied on to cards for the children to sequence and read. This exercise was usually undertaken in pairs or in small groups as part of the Morning Reading program. A retelling of the story was negotiated with the children and written up in 'wall story ' form and as individual copies for each student who then illustrated and glued the story into their English books as a future reading resource. Some of the more confident children read the retelling on to audio tape, for a listening post activity. The information technology coordinator, Glenn, worked with two groups of children and made two talking books from the retelling of the story. One of the talking books was for beginning literacy children and the other was for more advanced readers. They were read on the computer during morning reading and free activity times.

As part of our phonological awareness program, the class negotiated rhymes about the forest, based on a similar and familiar **Dr Seuss** rhyme pattern.

1. Come over to my home
   in the forest so green,
   where the animals live
   and the cockatoos scream.

2. Come over to my home
   I live in the trees,
   with the possums and birds
   and the wild honey bees.

3. Come over to my home
   I live underground,
   where the ants and the snakes
   can always be found.

4. Come over to my home
   I live up so high,
   if you climb up my branches
   you can touch the blue sky.

The rainforest as an ecosystem, very quickly became a discussion topic within the class group. Some children were able to call upon prior knowledge from an earlier unit of work on climate and environments. All children utilised their personal-cultural experiences of nearby rainforests. Rainforest words were brainstormed onto a chart and added to as we went along. This word list acted as an incentive and guide for the children in their own writing.

tropical	jungle	ferns	snakes	live	waterfalls
wet	humid	rain	hot	animals	green tree frog
equator	lizards	creepers	nuts	fruit	parrots/cockatoos
tall trees	animals	bamboo	hunt	destroy	tree kangaroo
insects	creeks	rivers	oxygen	vines	freshwater fish
medicine	palm trees				

The children's enthusiasm and interest in Jeanie Baker's story and in related components of the topic, prompted the teachers to search the internet for related information. We discovered a story about a forest, written by a person who belongs to the Penan tribe in Malaysia.

With Term 4 approaching we decided to extend the original WTT plan and follow a conservation and preservation emphasis, focussing on forests of the world.

Internet text

The Forest

I love the forest. I love the smell of the flowers, the chirping of the birds, the hum of the insects. The forest is my home .

My tribe, the Penans, has lived in the forest for hundreds and thousands of years. We know everything about this forest. The forest gives us everything we need, We make our homes out of palm leaves and bamboo pieces, hunt wild animals with our blowpipes, and gather wild plants like sago, fruits and.honey. We don't own many things because we move around to different places for hunting. We only have to buy tobacco, machetes and a few other things from the Outsiders.

The first signs of trouble were the huge noisy beasts the outsiders called "bulldozers." The bulldozers made a road through the middle of the forest. Why would the Outsiders want to build a road when nobody comes into the forest, we wondered?

We soon found out. The Outsiders brought more dangerous machines like chainsaws to chop down the tallest trees of the forest- trees that had stood there proud for many lifetimes. These trees were home to many forest animals and to the food we needed to survive.

I can hardly sleep at night because of all the noise. They have scared away the animals we hunt, and poisoned and flooded the rivers. Now we must buy food and other things.

Other tribes of the forest have come together with us to fight the machines. We have blockaded the roads, and cheer whenever the Outsiders have to stop cutting down the trees. But the forest is still being destroyed. Some of the younger tribe members have given up hope and now live in the Outsiders' villages. They cannot move around like they once did and most do not follow their culture anymore.

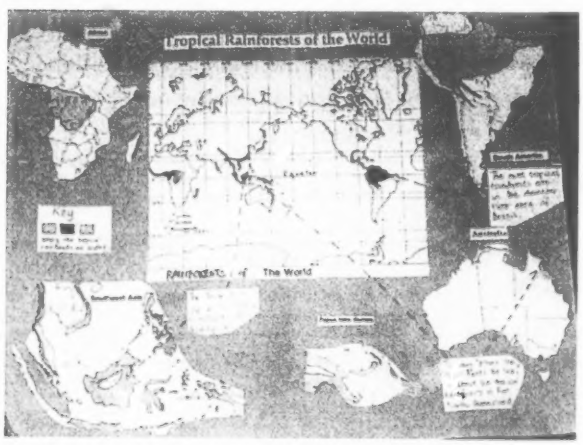
But we elders refuse to leave. The forest is our life. We cannot live without the forest.

We know that not all Outsiders want to destroy the forest. Some are helping to stop the forest being chopped down. Why don't the people who destroy the forest understand that the forest belong to everyone?

As teachers we decided that the text needed editing for our class group. We typed up the edited version and added appropriate illustrations to accompany the text. A big book and smaller copies of the text were produced for each child. Upon introducing the text, we explained where it had come from and after sharing it with the children we discussed why they thought this person wrote the story. We talked about why this person wanted the forest to stay the way it had always been. Issues of conservation and preservation came into focus during this time. We talked about the logging of forests and the types of things that timber is used for in our world. The children loved this story and had much to share throughout. The edited version was put onto audio tape so that the children could listen and read along with it during morning activities.

Through out this unit and in particular this part of it, the use of prior learning helped to develop children's understandings about the importance of rainforests to humans and all living things. We used the children's knowledge of the breathing cycle (term 1 topic), to discuss why trees are important to the planet.

By coincidence, the week that we began this extension unit, SBS TV screened programs based on a similar theme. Rhoda and Lily were keen to share the knowledge they had gained from these programs with the children. We introduced a map and revised the children's knowledge of continents (unit from 1996), keys and legends and direction (Maths unit term 2. 1997). The map showed the location of the world's tropical rainforests. We added short captions and arrows to this map highlighting the places we had been discussing.



We referred often to the map during class and small group activities and the children looked at it in their own time, pointing to the captions and continents with a ruler while others looked on. During an upper primary assembly, two children shared the information on the map to a good sized audience. Their confidence reflected their

interest and understandings in the topic at large and in the recording different types of information.

During one of our planning sessions, Lily suggested that as a class we view the film 'Emerald Forest'. It is a fictional story based on fact which shows the impact of depleting forests in the Amazon, the affect on the Indigenous people and the land, and the lack of regard for both by others- 'the outsiders'. The film was very relevant to the unit of work we were developing. The children enjoyed it and could relate easily to certain aspects of it. It helped to extend their knowledge of other indigenous groups around the world, and gave insight into certain environmental issues of the day.

A comparative study of the Penan tribe and the Amazon tribes was undertaken and written up in the format of a chart. Again this text became part of the class's reading program.

Penan (Book)	**Brazil (Video)**
They live in the forest	
They live in Malaysia	They live in Brazil
They used blowpipes to hunt	and bow and arrow and spears to hunt.
They were fighting for their culture and the forest	" " " "
The outsiders were chopping their forest down	" " " "
The Outsiders wanted the wood to make paper, furniture and lots of other things	They wanted to make a dam to stop the river and supply the new town with water.
They live hot, wet and humid countries	
They found their food in the jungle and hunted wild animals	" " " "
They used things from the forest to make their houses. They used palm leaves, bamboo and other forest plants and trees.	" " " "

At this stage, two focus questions were put forward to the class: What do we know about rainforests? and Why is it bad to cut rainforests down?

We wanted the children to answer these questions in groups, writing down their ideas on large sheets of paper. This exercise allowed the children to bring forward their knowledge of rainforests, life cycles, hunting and gathering techniques, photosynthesis etc. As teachers we modelled the process first, making clear the expectations. We talked about not worrying about spelling and upon sharing one of our own pieces of writing, we explained that words and ideas can be crossed out and changed along the way. At least one member of each group had to be an independent writer and they usually played the role of 'scribe' at least to start with.

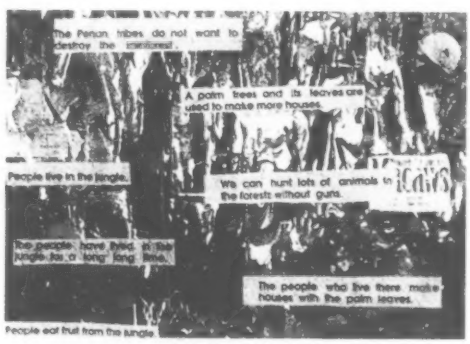
The children's efforts were beyond our expectations and they were pretty happy with what they had achieved. Each group presented their work and shared it with the other groups. The children experienced many important writing /reading and critical thinking strategies throughout this activity. On extending this successful learning experience, we then divided the class into competence groups: independent writers, developing independence, and beginning writers, and asked them to work on the following:

- the independent writers were to utilise the information from all groups on 'Why it is bad to cut forests down?' They had to write about the affects that deforestation has on the planet and its people in the form of protest posters and banners
- the developing-independence students worked on the class's ideas and thoughts on 'What we know about rainforests?' by producing posters with rainforest pictures from magazines and by adding captions to these posters
- the beginning writers negotiated short sentences using rainforest words.

A teacher worked with each group over a few sessions, acting as model and scaffolder.

Here are some examples of the children's writing based on the two focus questions:

'What do we know about rainforests?' and 'Why is it bad to cut the forests down?'


The Penan tribes do not want to destroy the rainforest.
A palm trees and its leaves are used to make more houses.
People live in the jungle.
We can hunt lots of animals in the forests without guns.
The people have lived in the jungle for a long long time.
The people who live there make houses with the palm leaves.
People eat fruit from the jungle.

All the work was displayed in the classroom and presented later on at an assembly. Some children took the risk of reading on their own at this assembly and then took great pride in the final outcome.

The use of the internet and of other important resources, enabled us to develop an interesting and vibrant unit of work. The unit developed as we went along, and the children's interest and enthusiasm helped channel the path it took, and its duration. Trish, Lily's mentor while surfing the net, came across a web site titled: 'A world community of old trees'. This web based project is designed to highlight and share information about special trees in world communities, it involves presenting and receiving information via the internet. We as teachers, thought that this project would be a good way to finish off our unit of work on forests. It was also an opportunity to have a go at developing web pages and to communicate world wide with other students on a particular topic. Our school had recently been networked and we had been inserviced on how to develop web pages using Claris Home Page.

The following is an overview of the learning outcomes and experiences we planned in relation to this Internet project. 'A world community of old trees'.

Special Trees- Weeks 7-9.

- to communicate through the internet to other people around the world and in different parts of Australia.
- use local knowledge and knowledge of "Plants" and "Forests" to photograph, illustrate and write about special trees around Maningrida.

Choose some trees- jumbarrich, mango meeting place, tallest tree wambajarr (near sewerage pond), ngorkjurrga, jambang (marlang)

- identify it- name English and Burarra, scientific name.
  take photos
- do illustrations of the trees
- measure the tree 135cm from the ground (circumference)
- describe your tree, any history you can find.
- exact location, measurements and approximate age.

To begin this project, a copy of a text written by students from Texas on the Pecan tree was enlarged, displayed and shared. As a class group we deconstructed the text together, taking into account the type of information we would need to research and present in our own text on special trees in our community. Some of the information we needed to collect involved measuring the trees height, circumference etc.

As a class , we chose two trees of significance to our community.

1. The mango (manggu) tree (although not endemic), and
2. The Green Plum or Jumbarrich tree.

The mango tree was chosen because of its significance as a place where important community meetings take place. The Green Plum tree, Burarra for Jumbarrich, was chosen for its abundance of tasty and nutritious fruit.

Firstly we focussed on the Mango tree. We visited the mango trees with camera, string and metre rulers. Photos were taken of the class standing around the mango trees and the circumference and height of one of these trees were measured. The children with their clipboards and prepared questions in hand, filled in the various details of the tree. Back at school, the children illustrated in rich crayon, the mango tree meeting place. We then discussed the information we had collected about the tree and also why this grove of trees is special to our community.

Three texts were negotiated. The first, introducing ourselves for the Home Page. The second text, explaining why these trees are important to our community and the final text giving factual information about this type of tree- its Latin name, its fruit etc. While negotiating and writing these texts, we referred to other texts as models.

The writing process involved: discussing what information we needed to share, scribing what was decided upon, reading back the information, and making changes before a final copy was typed up. The children's drawings and our photographs were added to the Mango text on our Home Page.

We are from Maningrida. We are in Marrchila class, our language is Burarra. Marrchila means crocodile.
Maningrida is 450km from Darwin in the Northern Territory, Australia.
We have pictures and texts about special trees in our community .

MANGGU
JUMBARRICH
LINKS
E-mail us.

MANGGU

Our special tree is called the mango tree. In Burarra, our language, we call it manggu.

The mango trees are opposite our school near the beach and near Maningrida clinic.

These mango trees are special because our community have their meetings under them. It is very shady under the mango trees.

We measured one mango tree and it was 11m tall and 220cm wide.

Every year in November fruit grows on the mango trees.

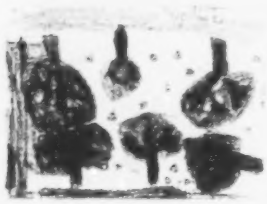
All the kids love to eat mangoes.

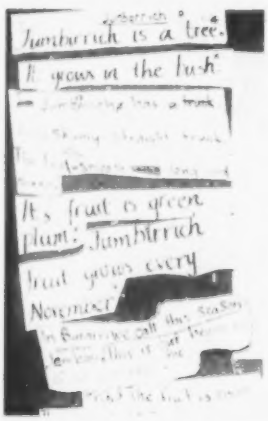
The scientific name for the mango tree is Mangifera indica Linnaeus.

The mango tree is related to the cashew tree and the pistachio tree.

Mango trees grow near the equator because they like tropical weather. The first mango trees grew in Burma and India.

A similar approach was taken for the collection and sharing of information on the Green Plum-Jumbarrich text. The children and teachers had much information to share on this tree: its nutritional value and medicinal uses.





JUMBARRICH

Jumbarrich is a tree. It grows in the bush. Jumbarrich has a long, skinny, straight trunk. The leaves are smooth, long and green. Its fruit is called green plum.

Jumbarrich fruit grows every November. In Burarra we call this season Jemberr. This is the beginning of our wet season.

The fruit is small. There are lots of fruit on the trees. We shake the trunk then the fruit falls down. We like to eat the fruit. It tastes sweet.

Jumbarrich – Medicine

Jumbarrich is good to use as a medicine for toothache. We use the branches. We burn the branch and then we crush it up. Then we put it on our tooth.

Jumbarrich makes us strong and healthy. We eat the fruit for coughing and when we feel weak.

Some children wrote independent texts about the Jumbarrich tree.

Jumbarrich is a tree.
It's got lots of fruit.
All the people come along, then they shake the long straight tree trunk.
Then the people eat the fruit,
they taste good. **Alishia**

We like to eat jumbarrich.
It tastes good.
The people go away and get some fruit in the bush. **Andrea**

This is
a jumbarrich tree.
Jumbarrich
has long, green leaves.

The children liked the idea of being on World Wide Web, they also liked the idea of sharing their knowledge with other children around the globe. Their knowledge of continents and mapping skills helped to enhance this learning experience.

The jumbarrich are very special because they have green plums. Some Aboriginal people eat the green plums and they like it that way. Aboriginal people look around for green plums on the ground. After the rain comes along, in the morning they go looking for green plums.
Kersey

Jumbarrich is tall. Jumbarrich is a long tree. It has a long, tall trunk. People like eating jumbarrich. Jumbarrich is sweet. People fill the bottle with the green plums.
Jacinta

Jumbarrich have long, skinny, straight trunks. They have green, juicy fruit. All the people come along and they shake the trunk. They pick up the jumbarrich with their hands and they put them in the bottle, a bag, billy can or dilly bag.
Melissa

The construction of web pages allowed us to incorporate a number of learning experiences and consolidation of the four macro skills. Children used their own

knowledge of their environment to discuss, read, write and draw about the topic. The integrating of the computer as a tool and resource into the teaching/learning process was a valuable learning experience for the teachers. It enabled the teachers and students to see possibilities and the scope for introducing other ways of presenting information and sharing this information to a wider audience.

A very final extension

All along we planned to write to Jeannie Baker, because it was her beautiful book: 'Where The Forest Meets The Sea' which provided the initial stimulus for our very extensive unit of work on 'Plants' and 'Forests'. The children continued to read her story and marvel at the illustrations for a long time after the completion of this particular unit of work.

December 1997.
Dear Jeannie Baker,

We love your book about **Where The Forest Meets The Sea**, and we like to read your story. It is our favourite story book because it made us feel good and happy, and we like the pictures that you made.
We think your story is important because it is good to know about the forest, how old it is, and about the animals that lived there.
We are worried about the forests being chopped down because they give us-shade, oxygen bush tucker, medicine and lots more.
We liked the story because Aboriginal people lived in the forests for a hundred million years ago. We are worried because we don't like the forest to change into a city.
Is the forest still there? We want to know if the forest is there or is it chopped down for houses?

From Marrchila class.
Maningrida School Arnhem Land.

Although the grammar in this letter is not perfect and time could have been spent on 'fine tuning' it, we felt that it was a very good piece of writing by our children. The children were very happy with their letter to Jeannie Baker and they told her all that they wanted to tell her. We received a letter back from Jeannie Baker soon after and much to the children's delight.

Where to next?

We were considering developing units of work based on issues of social justice from the Social Education curriculum: Land Rights (Invasion, Macassans, Wik, Native Title, Mabo and Reconciliation). These topics may seem difficult and perhaps sound too complex for an upper primary age group, but if presented and planned for in a sensitive and age appropriate way, they become no more complex than learning about photosynthesis or food chains. As a group, we felt that these topics would follow on quite naturally from this year's work, and would allow us to branch into areas other than natural science. With the children's prior knowledge and positive attitudes towards learning, these relevant and well publicised topics would make for a very appropriate and meaningful unit of work. We would continue to build on what the children know and understand through a range of learning experiences. We know that in the right environment all children will 'have a go', take risks when they are supported by their peers and their teachers. We all learn in different ways and the opportunity to show what you can do and know can only happen when this type of learning environment is established.

Conclusion

This year has been very rewarding and satisfying for both the children and the teachers of Marrchila class. The team teaching and multi-age approaches we put into place have given us many valuable learning experiences.

Perhaps one of the most important and inspiring lessons is that anything is possible in a positive learning environment where teachers are working together, teaching together, planning together and learning together. It does not happen by magic or good luck, it is achieved through enthusiasm, a willingness to change, adapt and adopt new ideas, to work through difficult times and continually reflect on the teaching and learning process that is happening in our class. In the beginning we had planned to follow through using the Walking Talking Text programming model. As we shared our ideas and "where to next?" we were able to include other programming models: the curriculum cycle and concentrated language encounters, where these models better suited our purpose. We employed a range of methodologies and strategies to find the best way for the children to achieve the outcomes. We all agree that employing team teaching and multi-age approaches showed us what was possible with the children in their learning of English and Burarra. We had strengths in different areas and the combination of these enabled us to take the children much further.

We set expectations for all children within the range of their abilities taking into account their knowledge about schooling, western culture and English and Burarra languages. The context we are working in is always challenging and it forces us to

constantly evaluate, reflect and plan ways to ensure all students whether full-time part-time or casual attenders at school achieve the intended learning outcomes. We want them to develop positive attitudes toward school, to enjoy school and the learning activities happening in the classroom.

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CHAPTER 5

Rough Diamonds: a case study of workplace literacy and training for Indigenous workers in the mining industry

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Introduction

This chapter uses a case study to discuss workplace literacy and Indigenous workers in one of the more remote parts of Australia. The work on which this case study is based was done in 1995. The specific focus of this chapter is a workplace literacy training project at a mining site in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. The mine site is in a very remote part of Australia and is the principal employer of Indigenous Australians in its locality. This is a typical scenario for many remote areas, where one large employer is the largest regional employer of Indigenous Australians. In these circumstances workplace training and workplace literacy training is often the only type of training available in situ.

In the case of the mine discussed in this case study, the training provided is not only relevant to the current workplace but also to the future working lives of the workers after the mine has closed. That is, the skills learned at the mine, for example building and operating earthmoving equipment and heavy vehicles, are also important and relevant skills for community development in remote areas. It is in learning these skills in the first place that literacy is important.

While the focus of this chapter is on workplace literacy and training for Indigenous workers the general principles discussed are intended to apply more generally as well.

The first part of this chapter discusses the particulars of the case study, providing background information and specific details of the training packages and literacy training materials that were developed in this project. The final part of the chapter outlines the theoretical principles that were behind the development of the packages and materials. Hopefully, by reviewing the process behind the materials development and showing examples of the materials first, the connections

with the theoretical approach will be more or less self evident.

Implicit throughout the chapter is a quiet plea for negotiated, local models of training, particularly for remote areas, rather than the use of standardised, generic, national models.

The context of the workplace

The workplace is a large mine site in the Kimberley region in northern Western Australia. Most of the mine workers are not locals. The majority of staff fly in from Perth on a 2 weeks on 2 weeks off basis. Some staff (at the time this project was conducted) fly in from from the nearest town (a half hour flight away) each day. The Indigenous workers all came from a nearby community about forty kilometres away and drove in each day in a Landcruiser 'Troopie' provided by the employer.

There are clear divisions between types of work and workers. The main distinction is between white collar/clerical/admin and blue collar/trades. People tend to be promoted within each group but not generally between groups.

There is a further division between the workers who are flown in for their cycle of shifts and the ones who fly in every day on the one hand and the Indigenous workers on the other. The principal distinction here is the amount of training and expertise the employees are seen as having when they are employed. The first two groups of workers work either in production at the main mine or in administrative positions. They are hired and, if necessary, trained for specific positions.

The Indigenous workers all come from the local region and have had broadly similar life history backgrounds and work histories. Those who had worked before, generally the older ones, had typically worked in the pastoral industry. Employment and training of local Indigenous workers was part of the agreement to establish the mine.

When employed at the mine the Indigenous workers start in one of two crews: the Civil Works crew or the Grounds Maintenance crew. The Civil Works crew does construction type work such as earthmoving, road building and building structures such as worksheds, while the Grounds Maintenance crew does general maintenance type work such as gardening and rehabilitation of the site. Initial employment in either of these crews is intended as a starting point for those who wish to train for other jobs and a start/finish point for those who don't want to. If workers want to move elsewhere they can do so either through apprenticeship or moving to other jobs at the mine.

The older workers, who also tended to have the least formal western education, tended to be in the Ground Maintenance crew. At the time this project was conducted, the majority of the workers in this crew said that they liked the work they were doing and wanted to stay where they were. A minority said that they wanted to move, not because they didn't like the work they were doing, but because of opportunities to earn more money and learn new skills.

The younger workers, who in general had more western education (upper primary level on average), tended to be in the Civil Works crew. It was the workers in this crew who tended to be more interested in in moving to the main mine or taking up apprenticeships.

Moving, however, depended on learning how to do new jobs, which depended on training. The company actively encouraged training. Incentives were given (more pay) for employees who became more skilled (eg had more 'tickets') whether those skills were used or not. For example, someone who can, say, operate a front end loader gets tickets so they can also operate a grader and a bulldozer but still works at operating the front end loader, gets paid extra for being able to operate the other two machines.

The training context

It was in the area of training that obstacles began to appear. The context of training needs to be explained. The two work crews mentioned above had a supervisor/trainer who worked with them and written, self directed training packages to work through. The trainer's role was both 'on the job' training and to help workers with the training packages. At the main mine, however, training was entirely self-directed through written training packages. For instance, if a worker wanted to learn how to do something new or something else, they would get the training packages and work through them until they could pass a competency test for that particular job.

It was in using the written packages that 'literacy problems' came up. The Indigenous workers were fine working in an oral mode and mostly OK using the written packages with assistance but floundered when using the written packages on their own. This proved to be the main obstacle to them moving on to better-paying positions. The situation was very similar to that discussed by Wignell and Boyd (1994), where Indigenous park rangers tended to be concentrated at the bottom of the employment hierarchy.

The role that written language played in the workplace, however, was quite different. In administrative positions working with written language becomes the work itself whereas at this mine site written language (in the form of training packages) was a means to an end. That is, a worker had to be able to use a training package to learn the skills required to do a job even if actually doing that job required little or no use of written language.

Even though literacy might not have been a requirement to be able to do a particular job, training was constructed so that it became a requirement to learn how to do a particular job. Once they were placed in positions where they were required to learn from self directed written training materials without the support of a trainer many of the Indigenous workers experienced difficulties. It was at this point that my role began.

The context of literacy training

The company had applied for and received funding from the Department of Education Employment and Youth Affairs (then just DEET) under the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program. After negotiations and discussions with company staff my role came to be that of developing a set of literacy training materials for the Indigenous workers and advising on training in general. My first reaction was one of "Yikes! I've got this big job to do, how the bloody hell am I going to do it". This is after assuring everyone concerned over the phone: "No worries".

I cannot stress too much the importance of getting a 'feel' of the context you are going to be working in. The story below illustrates this point. The first step taken was the obvious one: go out there and have a good look around and talk to as many people as possible. Generally this happened at first in fairly formal situations and then in informal ones like 'smoko', where you find out how people really think and how things really work. One thing needs mentioning here. The day I arrived at the mine I had a meeting with the Indigenous workers. They had heard that some "university literacy bloke" was coming out. It turned out that some of them were worried: they thought they were going to be tested and lose their jobs if they failed. People who have been 'measured' countless times and have inferred from this that somehow they don't measure up generally aren't too keen on being tested.

The whole atmosphere lightened and they cheered up no end when they found out there was going to be no testing and the whole program was voluntary. If they wanted to just stay in the job they had that was fine, if they wanted to get more tickets that was fine too. It was made explicit that they had to be able to read training packages to get more training and that my job was to develop materials to make reading easier for them. It turned out that some wanted to stay where they were but a majority wanted to be involved. Some were quite enthusiastic: they saw it both as a chance to make more money and to learn skills which would be useful in their community.

Concurrent with the interpersonal side of things was some general ferreting around, getting hold of as many training packages as possible, or at least a fair range, and in general working out the role of written text in workplace and the potential workplace.

Just a word of caution here. Usually with workplace literacy stuff you get called in after some 'problem' has been perceived. You mostly come in after the event so there is often a sizable gap between what you would do if you were involved from the beginning and what you can do, given that what you are doing often has a fairly low priority in an organisation's scheme of things. Unfortunately there's not a lot you can do about that. It is difficult to change systems that are already in place in organisation. I decided that the best available option was to play with the cards I was dealt and play the hand as well as I could.

Background to developing the training packages

On visits to the mine site I collected the existing training packages for the Civil Works crew and a sample of training packages for other jobs at the mine. I took these packages away to analyse. I found that existing training packages (for both the Civil Works crew and for mine site at large) weren't always very appropriate. That is, the language wasn't appropriate for the job the packages were supposed to be doing. The samples below illustrate this point. The examples show original and rewritten versions in 'plain English'. I believe that the original versions stand in the way of effective communication.

(Original)
Improper jump procedures can cause an explosion resulting in personal injury.

(New)
You have to jump start properly or you might blow up the battery and get hurt.

(Original)
With the transmission in neutral, moving the lever results in machine rotation in the same direction as in forward gear.

(New)
When the dozer is in neutral and you move the lever the dozer will turn the same way as when it is in gear and going forwards.

(Original)
Make initial determination as to the failure of the machine to crank.

(New)
First try to work out why the dozer didn't crank

The main difference between the two versions is that, in the rewritten versions most of the 'doing' information has been put back into verbs, the 'natural' place for it to be in spoken English. For example, *make an initial determination* means more or less the same as *first try to work out*.

Another difference is that information about, say, cause and effect has been moved into conjunctions, where it is most often found in spoken English. For example, *improper jump procedures can cause an explosion resulting in personal injury* can just as easily be said as *you have to jump start properly or you might blow up the battery and get hurt*.

The main rationale behind rewriting the new versions as they are is that, if people are familiar with and regularly use spoken English but do not regularly use written

English, then the typical patterns of spoken English are going to be easier for them to understand. In addition, important information is made more easily accessible through the grammatical changes to a more 'spoken' form.

The packages also varied a lot in the kind of language they used and in how they were set out. The packages ranged from photocopies of workshop manuals to 'simplified' workshop manuals, often reduced to point/note form (which actually made them even harder to use) and could well have hindered rather than enhanced training. The nature of the packages depended on who developed them. I suggested rewriting all the training packages but this was not really negotiable. It was also impractical because there were hundreds of packages.

Writing the training packages

Given these constraints, and with the resources available I decided on a four part strategy. In summary this strategy was:

1 To rewrite the existing training packages for the Civil Works crew, since this crew was seen as the key point of transition to working in other jobs at the mine.

2 To write a set of literacy training materials to accompany the rewritten training packages. The purpose of these materials was to develop and enhance skills which could be transferred to the training packages used at the mine site.

3 To write a set of trainer's notes to accompany the literacy training materials. A trainer was to be available to help workers who were having trouble with the self directed materials.

4 To develop a set of literacy competencies. This was not my idea but it was part of the contract between the company and DEET(YA).

There were a number of background considerations behind the first two of these strategies. First, since the materials were intended for into the future, for the working life of the mine, I had no way of knowing which particular individuals would be using the materials. Therefore I decided to try to write them so that the workers with the least amount of formal western education could use them with the assistance of a workplace trainer. I wrote the literacy materials in modules so that a worker could pick up, say, one module and, if they found that already knew how to do what was in it, they could move on to another one.

The training packages needed to be written so that could be used in conjunction with doing a job rather than learned beforehand. This involved decisions about both content and presentation. In terms of content I needed to preserve the technical information necessary to do the job but at the same time remove any obvious obstacles to communication. I did this by trying to be clear and explicit in using

instruction and direction words and in making sure that, say, if all the parts of a job had to be done in a particular order, then that order was made clear.

In terms of presentation, all of the materials were presented in 14 pitch Palatino type. My rationale was the the slightly larger than usual type size and the use of a type face with serifs made the print a little easier to read, especially if the materials were being used in the open air in conjunction with doing a job. I wanted them to be able to be read at around arms' length distance by people with good eyesight and able to be read at closer range by people with poorer eyesight. Since I had no way of knowing which individuals were going to use the packages I opted for what I thought was the most reader-friendly type face and size.

The training packages

Seven training packages were developed for the Civil Works crew. The packages dealt with the use and maintenance of heavy vehicles and earthmoving machinery and how to operate the cement mixing plant. The packages were called 'Tipper Package', 'Loader Package', 'OKA Package' (an OKA is a heavy four wheel drive vehicle), 'Grader Package', 'Dozer Package', 'Backhoe Package' and 'Batch Plant Package' (the batch plant is the cement mixing facility). In naming the packages I used the names that the workers used to refer to the equipment rather than the manufacturers' 'official' names.

Each package starts with information on what the package is for and how to use it. The following examples come from the Tipper package.

Read this before you start the package

What this package is for

This package tells you how to look after and use different parts of the Mitsubishi 12 Tonne Tipper.

How to read this package

The package is in sections and each section is about a different part of the tipper or about how to do a different job. Some sections have pictures. Use the pictures and the writing and the real tipper to help you work out what you have to do.

The package is not like a story. You don't have to start at the beginning. You can start anywhere. It depends on what you want to know about.

The list below tells you how to use the package:

1 Work out which part of the tipper you want to know about or which job you need to do.

2 Look at the list on the next page. This list tells you what page to go to.

3 Turn to the section you want.

4 Look at the heading. The heading tells you if you've got the right part.

5 Look at the picture if there is one.

6 Read the writing. If you don't know a word don't just stop reading, keep going. Look back to the picture to help you work it out.

7 If you can, find the part on the tipper.

The following, also from the Tipper package, are typical examples of the 'content' of a package.

Section 1

TYRES AND WHEELS

The wheels have detachable rims type and are fitted with 11R 22.5 tyres.

The tyre pressure for the front and back wheels should be 825 kpa/120 PSI.

You check the tyre pressure with the air hose you use to pump up the tyres.

Words

detachable: means that you can take it off

tyre pressure: means how much air is in the tyres

kpa and PSI: these are different ways to measure how much air is in the tyres

The air hose you use when you pump up the tyres will show you how much pressure is in the tyre.

Section 6

BRAKE TANKS

There are three brake tanks.

Two of them are under the driver's side chassis rail.

The other one is under the battery box.

You need to drain the condensate out of the tanks every day.

You drain them by pulling on the drain cock ring pulls.

Words

condensate: means the liquid that collects in the tanks

My aim in rewriting the packages was to get them to a point where the technical terms needed to operate in the workplace were preserved, and explained in localised glossaries if necessary, but at the same time to make the instruction and direction words as 'spoken' and as everyday as I could. The reason behind this was that if people know clearly what they are being asked to do they will have less trouble in doing it. Judging from the anecdotal feedback I have received the 'plain English' versions of the training packages made using them a lot easier.

The literacy training materials

After rewriting the training packages I then wrote a set of literacy training materials. These materials consisted of four units (modules) and a set of trainer's notes. The materials focused on developing reading skills, since very little, if any, writing was involved in the jobs the workers were doing or were likely to be doing.

The four units were called:

1 What training packages are for, what information is in them and how to find it.

2 Different kinds of writing in training packages

3 Making it easier to read training packages

4 Working out what words mean

In designing the modules I took a top-down approach. The purpose of the first module was to help trainees find the information they needed and negotiate their way around

a written text. The second module focused on the purpose of particular texts, for example whether they were giving information about something or whether they were giving directions about how to do a job. My rationale for this was that if trainees could recognise the purpose of a text fairly easily then they would be more clued up on how to use it. The third module moved down into the specifics of the language of the different types of texts the trainees would encounter. The final module moved right down to word level, focusing on things like derivational morphology.

The examples below give a snapshot of the packages.

What is in this unit.

Use this unit if you want to find out:

- What training packages are for.
- What kind of information is in training packages.
- How to find information in training packages.

This unit is divided into sections. The Contents shows you what is in each section and what page it starts on.

Contents

Section	What is in the section	Page
	What is in this unit	1
1	What training packages are for	3
	Exercise 1	4
	Exercise 2	5
	Exercise 3	6
2	What kind of information is in training packages	7
3	How to find information in training packages	11
	Exercise 4	12
	Exercise 5	14
	Exercise 6	14
	Exercise 7	15
4	Extra practice Exercises	16
	Exercise 8	16
	Exercise 9	16
	Exercise 10	17
5	the Exercises in the other sections of this unit	18

The following are examples of the types of exercises I used.

Example 3

Sub-section a – Dozing

Straight dozing
If the blade digs in and the back of the dozer lifts up, raise the blade so will keep cutting evenly.
When you are moving a heavy load and the speed drops, shift to a slow down and/or lift the blade a little bit.
When you are doing finishing or levelling work it's better if the blade is full.

Slot dozing
When you do this you can have larger loads at the front of the blade. You do this for stockpiling and when you want to move a lot of stuff in a hurry.

Exercise 3

This example is:

a) showing you how to work some machine
b) showing you how to look after some machine
c) showing you how to do some job with or on a machine
d) all three of a), b), and c)

Section 3 – How to find information in training packages

Training packages aren't like a story. You don't have to start at the start and go right to the end. It's easier for you and saves time if you can just go straight to the part you are looking for.

You have to:

- Know that you've got the right package.
- Be able to find the right part of a package.

Knowing you've got the right package

This is pretty easy. The title of the package should tell you if you've got the right one or not. For example, if you're looking for the Batch Plant package and the front page says "Training Package for Batch Plant", then you know you've got the right one. All training packages will have some kind of title that tells you what the package is about.

Finding the right part of a package

Not all packages are the same. Some packages have a Contents page. This page will tell you the headings of the main bits of information in the package and what page to go to. For example,

Contents

Section	What is in the section	Page
1	Pre-start checks	2
2	Start up	5
3	After start checks	6
4	Shut down procedures	7

Exercise 4

What page would you go to if you wanted to find out about:

pre-start checks

shut down procedures

In the exercises I used multiple choice and very short answer type questions because I thought they were less threatening than asking people to write longer answers. Answers were provided both to provide feedback and to remove any thoughts that the unit was a test. I also tried to write as close to spoken language as I could get while still getting the points across.

The following examples are from Module Three: Making it easier to read training packages.

Some tips on how to read better

From Units 1 and 2 you already know how to find information in training packages. You also know about different kinds of writing and the different jobs different kinds of writing do.

When you are working with a training package **remember** that you already know something about what you are learning about. Use the package to add to what you already know. Use what you already know to help you with the package.

Don't just read one word at a time and **don't** stop when you get to a word you don't know. Go backwards and forwards to try to work it out.

It's **more important** to get a good idea of what a piece of writing is about than to understand every word in it.

Use things that you already know to help you work out things you don't know.

Below are some short bits of writing with some blank spaces where words have been left out. Underneath you will see a list of words.

Put the right word in each space.

When you do this you have to read backwards and forwards to work out what the right word is.

Try the next one now.

Exercise 1

Section 6 – How to use the grader better

a) Set the blade when the _____ is still so you can get the best position, angle and _____ action.

b) When you can, start your next pass on _____ ground.

c) Make small _____ on the move.

d) If you don't have to, never run over _____ .

e) _____ the windrow flowing _____ of the wheel.

f) It's better to do two _____ cuts than one heavy cut.

g) Use the lean _____ and articulation.

h) _____ the windrow where you can reach it.

Words to pick from

adjustments, flat, windrows, Keep, cutting, Put, wheel, light, grader, clear

I used quite a few cloze exercises for two reasons. First they help a reader to learn how to use the surrounding text to search for clues and second, because, when I trialled a few exercises, the workers liked doing clozes.

Exercise 4

Look at the bits of writing below. They both tell you about the same thing but they do it differently. There are some parts in dark print. See if you can find the part that means the same thing in the other bit.

This machine must be operated with the floor plate **securely in place** at all times. There are lines and components located below **the operator station** which contain fluids under high pressure.

Moving the lever forwards results in a left turn when moving forward and a right turn when moving in reverse.

Moving the lever towards the operator results in a right turn when moving forward and a left turn **when moving in reverse.**

With the transmission in neutral, **moving the lever results in machine rotation** in the same direction as in forward gear.

When you use this machine, you have to make sure the floor plate is in the right place and tight all the time. This is because there are lines and parts that are full of fluids under a lot of pressure. These are right under where you sit.

When you are going forwards and you move the lever forwards the dozer turns left. When you are going backwards and you move the lever forwards the dozer turns right.

When you move the lever towards you the dozer turns right when you are going forwards and it turns left when you are going backwards.

When the transmission is in neutral and you move the lever the dozer turns around the same way as if you were going forwards.

In the exercise above, the top piece of text is in its original and the second piece is in the rewritten form. The purpose of the exercise was to help the workers identify what had been changed between the two versions and, in conjunction with follow-up exercises, to help them to shift between more and less abstract styles of text. The answers are in the back of the package.

The trainer's notes

The trainer's notes are intended as a guide to a trainer in assisting workers to use the materials. At the time the materials were written the trainer who had been working with the Civil Works crew had put in his resignation and a new trainer had not yet been employed, although one was being sought. The following is a sample from the trainer's notes.

Introduction

This booklet contains notes for the trainer using these literacy materials. As well as giving specific guidelines about how to use the materials it also provides other more general information and notes on developing additional materials.

These materials are intended to provide enough help to get most people going in reading and using training packages independently. They should be enough for most employees. Some employees, however, might need additional practice. In this regard these materials are intended to provide the trainer with models for developing more materials from existing training packages...

What the materials are for

The literacy training materials have been written so that they can be used by trainees either by themselves, in pairs or small groups or with assistance from a trainer. It is probably best to begin with some assistance. The general idea is for trainees to develop literacy skills up to the stage where they can use most training packages by themselves with minimal instruction.

Training packages are not intended to be used as substitutes for hands on training. They should be used as an aid to training, in conjunction with hands on training, not as the whole of training.

Model of training and learning

The general model of teaching is pretty simple and goes in four stages:

- I'll show you how to do it
- Now we'll do it together
- Now you do it and I'll watch
- Now you have a go on your own

Not everyone will have to go through the whole process. Some trainees might start at the stage where they can do it themselves. Others might start at the beginning and take a while to move on. The document on Competencies explains how this works...

THE UNITS

The following section has some more specific information about each unit.

1 What training packages are for, what information is in them and how to find it

This unit develops skills in understanding the purpose of a document and in finding your way around a document. The exercises are designed to give trainees practice in using things like tables of contents and headings to find information. It also leads them into the second unit.

2 Different kinds of writing in training packages

One important skill in reading effectively is recognising what a piece of writing is for. This unit starts off by helping trainees to recognise when a piece of writing is either giving information (for example describing a piece of equipment) or when a piece of writing is giving instructions on how to do something or on what to do.

The focus here is on how the whole piece of language is put together. For example trainees need to be able to recognise when a set of instructions needs to be carried out in the right order. In this case things to go on are 1) numbers and 2) the instruction words at the beginning of the sentences...

3 Making it easier to read training packages

It is important for effective reading to be able to use other information present in a text to work out what words mean. If people read using a 'one word at a time' approach they tend to stop whenever they reach a word they don't know. This is a very inefficient reading strategy. This unit is aimed at developing a more 'global' approach to reading. The exercises where some words are left out (called Cloze exercises) are designed to get trainees to read forwards and backwards to work out what word from the list is the right word. They have to use the surrounding text to work out the answer...

4 Working out what words mean

It helps in reading if you can break a large word into parts. many words can be broken down. For example, an ending like -er tells you that you are dealing with something that does something (eg load-er — something that loads), an ending like -ate tells you that you are doing something (eg excav-ate), an ending like -ion tells you that you are looking for some thing (eg excavat-ion), a beginning like de- tells you to stop doing something (eg de-activate). Hopefully trainees will be able to break up words like de-activ-ate and make a guess as to the meaning from the parts. Where possible it is best to offer a simpler word that means more or less the same thing in explaining difficult words (eg excavation = hole more or less)...

Developing your own materials

A trainer using these materials with trainees will get a good idea of individual strengths and weaknesses. The materials contain a variety of exercises designed to address specific things. If someone shows a weakness in a particular area it is fairly simple to use another training package to develop exercises similar to those in these materials...

The competencies

The main areas of competence in literacy which are addressed are as follows:

1 Ability to decode print. That is the initial competency is to be able to recognise words in print.

2 Identifying the purpose of a text (eg a training package, a form etc). Knowing what the text is used for.

3 Familiarity with conventions and structure of written text. Working through a training package. Can use tables of contents and section headings to find information.

4 Comprehension. Can get information from a text.

5 Application. Can apply information in a text to a 'real' situation.

Rationale behind the competencies

The competencies used in this project are based on the National Framework of Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competence (Australian Committee for Training Curriculum, 1993). This framework discusses competence in broader terms than are necessary for this project but in order to provide context for the competencies outlined below the whole framework is summarised briefly below.

In summary this framework considers competence along three dimensions; Aspects of competence, Stages of competence and Phases of learning.

Aspects of competence refers to what communication is being used 'for'. Six aspects are identified: procedural communication, technical communication, personal communication cooperative communication. systems communication, public communication.

In addition to *aspects of competence* the framework uses three stages of competence; assisted competence, independent competence and collaborative competence.

The model also uses the term *phases of learning*. This is divided into four phases. These are: reflecting on experience, engaging in activities, broadening applications, critically reviewing

Each statement of competence is expressed in two ways so as to reflect the shift from assisted to independent competence. Thus for each competency there will be a statement beginning "Can **with assistance**..." and a statement beginning "Can **independently**...". Learning strategies are suggested with each competency and are intended to promote a shift from assisted competence to independent competence.

The statements are written in a way which identifies the **orientation** of the

statement (the action/process the trainee is involved in), the *stage* of competence (assisted or independent) and the context (the environment/location of the task). A typical statement of competence is illustrated below.

The trainee can *independently* **apply** the information in a training package **to performing** particular tasks.

The words in **bold** here identify 'who' is involved and what action they need to 'do' (can apply and perform)

The word in *italics* indicates the stage of competence.

The underlined words show the environment of the competence (the training package, particular tasks).

Another example could be:

The trainee can *independently* **identify** the purpose of a training package.

Here the trainee should be able to describe verbally what a training package is for.

The examples below show some specific competency statements.

General statement

The trainee can use language, literacy and numeracy to perform procedures and strategies for performing tasks.

Specific statements

Literacy

The trainee can identify orally what they already know about performing a particular task.

- The trainee can identify the purpose of a training package.
- The trainee can identify what a particular training package is for by reference to the title page.
- The trainee can use a table of contents to find specific sections of a training package.
- The trainee can identify different types of information in a training package.
- The trainee can identify the relationship between illustrations and written language in a training package.
- After reading a part of a training package the trainee can explain orally the steps involved in completing a task.
- The trainee can identify either where to look for or who to ask for information related to performing a task.
- The trainee can use a training package to learn how to complete a new task.

Brief outline of the theoretical model used

This study is informed by and builds upon Wignell and Boyd's (1994) study of workplace literacy at Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory of Australia. The same theoretical model and method, derived from a combination of systemic functional linguistics and ethnography, was applied in each case.

The principal points at issue here are the relationship between reader and text and the relationship between language and its contexts of use. The position on the relationship between reader and text that informs this chapter is drawn from Freebody and Luke (1990). The model of literacy training used in this project assumed that literacy is a question of degree, not a question of literate v not literate. We all reach the limits of our literacy at some point.

The model used here suggests four roles for a literate person. These roles are defined by how a person approaches written text. The roles describe strategies and orientations, they do not categorise people. These roles are:

1) The reader as a code breaker. This refers to a reader's ability to see a connection between marks on a page and language. That is, in order to read, a reader must be able to decode printed symbols, they have to be able to recognise letters and words. This is minimal condition for reading. For instance a person might, in some circumstances, be able to decode words on a page but have no idea what they are reading. Readers who use only this strategy tend to focus on every word when reading, read for sound rather than sense and tend to stop as soon as they encounter a word they don't know.

2) The reader as a text participant. This refers to reading comprehension or making sense of what is read and relates to the background knowledge readers bring to a text. Often, if someone appears to be able to 'read' but not make sense of what they have read what they need is more 'content' information to build up a bank of experience to bring to the written text rather than just doing more reading.

3) The reader as a text user. This refers to the reader's ability to use or do something with a written text. This involves understanding the purpose of a text, what it is for. For example, if we take operating instructions for some machine, someone might be able to 'read' the text but not know what the instructions are for.

Regarding 2) and 3). Different people bring different degrees of background knowledge to a text. In the case of people who have had very limited experience with written language, it cannot be simply assumed that they know what different texts (eg instructions) are for. It also cannot be assumed that they can necessarily find their way around texts by using tables of contents, headings etc without being shown how to do it.

4) The reader as a text analyst. This involves the ability to 'read between the lines' so to speak, ie to read a text critically and to evaluate it, not simply take it at face value.

The main area of concern for this project was 3). If a person is operating at least at the level of a text user they should be able to use training packages effectively.

Each of the roles above involves people using different strategies to read and bringing different degrees of knowledge to the text. The strategies used to teach reading/literacy depend to a large extent how the reader approaches the text.

In teaching reading it is not necessary to go through these roles in sequence. Even though it is a necessary first step to break the code it is possible and desirable to address the whole lot at once. For example, if a person is operating at a minimal code-breaker stage it would be necessary to provide intensive, individual tuition but this could be done in the context of the job and building up the person's background knowledge and knowledge about what the text is for at the same time as teaching what letters on a page and words are. It was with these roles in mind that the competences discussed above were developed.

Regarding the relationship between text and context. If we consider, for instance, typical spoken language, say a conversation, we find that the language is quite close to the context of speaking. In a conversation we can, for instance, refer to physical things (and people) around them and use other contextual cues that can only be understood by actually being there. In this instance the shared experience makes comm unication easier.

The idea of a connection between a text and its context can be extended to the broader social context. If we speak within a close community to other members of that community there is a lot of shared knowledge and shared assumptions. We can speak fairly cryptically knowing that the people we are talking to share more or less the same body of knowledge and experience and can make the connections we intend. We can leave things out and make assumptions knowing that the person or people we are talking to can fill in the gaps and, if they can't fill them in, they can always ask for clarification because we are standing there in front of them.

The further we move away from this body of shared experience, either at a personal or community level, the more we have to make what we mean explicit, the more details we have to fill in so that people can understand us. That is, we cannot rely on the shared physical and social context to do a lot of the work. For example, we might write about something that we know . lot about but we cannot necessarily assume that the person we are writing to knows as much about it as we do. If we want to tell somebody about something that they know nothing about, we have to supply much of the context for our reader so that they can make sense of what we are saying. Because we are not there personally to fill in the gaps the text needs to be self contained.

In general, the further we move from direct face-to-face communication the more abstract, or distanced from its context, the more it needs to be able to stand alone, to communicate its meaning by itself. Likewise, the more we are talking/writing in general terms rather than about specific, tangible events, the more abstract a text becomes.

The issue of the relationship between texts and context is one of the key issues in literacy. Written language is not just spoken language written down, it involves different ways of meaning which, to a very large extent, are tied to the relationship between text and context. It is not, however, the intention here to enter into a long theoretical discussion of text and context. A concise account of the main differences between speaking and writing can be found in Halliday, M.A.K. (1985), *Spoken and Written Language*. Geelong: Deakin University Press.

As an illustration, if we think about language and context as a kind of scale, we can place different examples of language on that scale.

On the scale above 1 would indicate language at its most context dependant. In the workplace context this would something like workers talking about a specific job while they were doing that job. Something like:

'This bearing's stuffed, mate. Chuck us a new one will you.'

Keeping the topic related to bearings, point 6 would represent something like, say, from an engineering journal about a more efficient design for bearings, where such an article was both technical and theoretical.

At point 1 on the scale you have to be there to know what 's going on. At point 6 you have to be an engineer to know what the article is about. Points 2, 3, 4 and 5 (any number of points in fact) represent the space between the two extremes.

Placing a training package on the scale

If we consider a self-directed, written training package as a text with a relationship to its context, where would it be placed on the scale? The first thing we need to consider is what is a training package for?: what is its reason for being?

First, and most obviously, a self-directed training package has the job of helping someone to learn independently how to do a job that they don't know how to do already. If that job involves making something or operating or maintaining some piece of equipment then it is clear that the training package should be able to be used in close proximity to the tools and materials needed to do that job. It is, therefore, a text intended to be used in context. If this were the only variable operating it would place the text somewhere down near the 'language in action' end of the scale.

Other variables, however, operate to move the text a little further from the 'action' end of the scale. First, the text is written so, unless there is a trainer present, there is no scope for immediate feedback so the text must contain enough information to get the job done. Second, although it is intended to be used in context it is also a teaching text so it cannot make too many assumptions about what the user already knows. For example, the writer of such a training package cannot assume that the user has anything like the same amount of technical knowledge that they have. The package should not be too technical or abstract but it does need to contain some technical terms. The names of tools and the parts of machines, for instance, are technical names that people working in a trade need to know. The text, again, needs to contain enough technical information to get the job done properly without confusing the user. Here the use of technical terms moves the text away from the action end of the scale but this can be compensated for by adding things like clearly labelled, accurate diagrams or good quality photographs which provide some context and help bring the text back towards action. Even though a package is intended to be used in learning how to do a job it is not tied to any one particular instance. What I mean here is that the package should be able to be used for all cases of someone learning to do that job. In this sense it must be somewhat generic, which again moves it a little bit to the right on the scale.

The package would need also to contain other information to get the job done. For example, if the stages of a job need to be done in a particular order then the package needs to say explicitly what that order is, either by using numbers or by saying things like 'first, next, then...'. If a job doesn't need to be done in any set order but all parts of the job need to be done, that needs to be stated too in some way. The more explicit 'how to' information that is there, the easier it is to use the package in context.

From the discussion above I would place such a training package somewhere around point 3 on the scale, heading towards the action end.

This theoretical model was used to provide general theoretical principles about the relationships between language and context. These general principles then informed the development of literacy training materials for this particular site. It is hoped that this paper will reconcile the general and the particular by arguing and demonstrating

that any broad theoretical model, or policy for that matter, needs to be applied in the context of a fairly detailed knowledge of a particular site. That is, what is relevant and appropriate for the south east corner of the country might not necessarily be relevant to more remote or more different parts of the country.

Conclusion

There has been no follow-up study at the site but anecdotal evidence suggests that the materials are in use and that feedback is positive. One story that came back to me is that some of the workers weren't all that keen on the illustrations in the packages so they went out with a digital camera and took photographs. They then scanned the photographs on to a computer and, using the disk masters of the materials, replaced the original illustrations with the photographs, thus 'fixing up' the materials. I was impressed with this and concluded that if they were skilled and literate enough to manipulate text in that way then the materials had probably outlived their usefulness for those particular workers.

A second point, alluded to earlier, is that, from my experience anyway, designing materials in response to specific local needs, and with at least some degree of local knowledge, particularly in remote areas, is likely to be more productive than trying to introduce a more standardised, generic approach developed in and for totally different circumstances.

A final point is that I found the integration of theory and practice to be useful, productive and time-saving. That is, having a principled, coherent theoretical model to use as a tool and as an aid to decision making made my job a lot easier and, I think, led to a pretty good product.

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CHAPTER 6

Digging Deeper: Using Text Analysis to Develop the English Literacy of Indigenous Students

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Introduction

Indigenous students bring a repertoire of literacies to the tertiary education context and these are to be acknowledged and built upon. Print literacy in English is a literacy most would recognise as important to add to that repertoire and as essential for their progress through the formal education system and beyond. Thus it was that, in 1993, partly in an attempt to find out to what extent the needs of indigenous students for the development of English literacy were being met, and partly to discover what literacy teaching practices my peers were finding successful, I conducted a survey of the English language and literacy teaching practices of 52 educators who were engaged in teaching adult indigenous students from non-urban communities across the Northern Territory in a wide range of both VET and Higher Ed courses.

From their responses to a comprehensive questionnaire, I was able to gauge how my fellow educators constructed themselves, their students and their literacy teaching practice. That is, most constructed themselves (like me) as subject specialists pressured by course demands, concerned with students' English literacy levels yet with little time in practice to attend to their literacy needs. Their assessment of students' English/literacy development appeared to be intuitive rather than systematically obtained and most were unable to articulate in any detail the kind of difficulties with reading and writing in English students experienced. The failure of fifty percent of respondents to share any personally effective English/literacy teaching strategies suggested that many had a limited repertoire to draw upon.

Students emerged from the educators' discourse as clearly stating their needs/wishes for English/literacy teaching over and over again; as pragmatic, their goal being 'job-related English'; as 'frustrated', 'restricted' 'downhearted' with their

lack of success; as 'knowing where it's at' (in responding with alacrity to learning and using computer technology); as clearly rejecting activities they considered meaningless or 'boring'; as actively resisting being singled out in class as individuals and reluctant to contribute in large groups; as extremely sensitive to being shamed in any way; as having 'huge gaps' in their schooling; and as having limited knowledge of the world outside their community which forms the context for most English texts.

The picture that emerged overall was, for a host of reasons, one of frustration on all sides and low levels of success. The vexing questions this raised for me were: 'Why do Aboriginal students from non-urban communities who are multi-lingual and gifted language learners have such trouble with English, especially English written text?' and 'What culturally sensitive teaching/learning approach that non-English/literacy specialists could use 'on the run' might address these difficulties?'

The remainder of this paper documents the research journey I followed to investigate the difficulties inherent in English written texts and which led me to the particular text analysis strategy I now use. This particular approach to text analysis is an attempt to address the issues raised above: to dig deeper than before into a text; to maximise its potential for meaning; to capitalise on the opportunity this provides to explicitly teach about text, about the English language, about the responsibilities of writers and readers, about western ideas and history, about the need to be alert to the reality being constructed in a text; and at the same time to do this in a way that is comfortable for students.

Although I now regard shared reading with students as a major strategy which should be central to the practice of any educator of adult indigenous students, I do not regard it as the only one, since an integrated approach must also address writing. However reading, not writing, is the focus of this particular paper.

The text analysis strategy referred to above draws from a number of theoretical frameworks and involves considering the same text in a number of ways: as a map; as ideas; as imagery; as texture; as rhetoric; as construction of reality; and as the site of competing Discourses.

The ideas in text

A speaker at a conference some years before I undertook my research had intrigued me by talking about the many allusions in English to our human, embodied experience, for example, 'the teeth of the gale', the foot of the hill', the mouth of the river etc. My early readings enlightened me further:

> In man's world-the world as man sees it and describes it in everyday language-he is, in the most literal sense, the measure of all things. Anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism are woven into the very fabric of his language; it reflects his biological make up, his natural terrestrial habitat, his mode of locomotion, and even the shape and properties of his body (Lyons, 1977, p. 690).

I felt that sharing this discovery of the body metaphors apparently so common in English with students, would demonstrate the human experience underpinning the development of the language, making it less alien and transcending cultural differences.

For some time I had also puzzled over what I perceived as the hidden 'mathematics' in English text. Words and phrases like 'just then', 'every day', 'behind a tree', 'forward', 'returned' etc suggested to me concepts of time, space, directionality, 'hidden' in the text.

The idea that as speakers and writers we are constantly using language to orient ourselves and our listeners or readers within a landscape, whether real or imaginary, was new to me. I wondered whether my students were aware of the fact that, as readers, they are expected to read a text rather like a map, picking up on any cues which pinpoint the writer's spatial/temporal location and then use these 'co-ordinates' to adopt that vantage point most advantageous for an understanding of what follows in the text.

As I was to discover later, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their study of the presence of metaphor in everyday language go further. They maintain that our 'embodied' experience actually leads us to place a *value* on directionality. For example 'he perked *up*' has a greater value (is more desirable) than 'he was feeling *down*'. She was 'as *high* as a kite' has greater value than 'she was as *low* as could be'. The authors rationalise this as being based on our direct experience of physical existence. That is, being upright (conscious) is more desirable from a survival point of view than taking a drooping or prone posture (unconscious). So, generally speaking, *up* and *high* are 'good' while *down* and *low* are 'not good'.

These discoveries about the physicality of textual reference and the orientation process a writer undertakes on behalf of readers went some way towards clarifying some of the difficulties for students I had already intuited. Whether these same metaphors and values are grammaticalised in other languages I am unable to say, but it seems to me there is a clear need when we are reading a text with students to be explicit about this kind of value and how it is revealed in the English language.

Next in my reading I turned to linguists who view a speaker's or writer's language as a series of propositions. In this particular view of language, propositions are constructed

> when we make socially and culturally relevant categorical distinctions in the continuous flow of pure reality'. '... [W]e form concepts which represent these discrete distinctions in things and properties of the world and we have learned to couple these with natural language expressions. ... This holds 'not only for things but also for the processes, events, actions and states in which such things and properties participate ... (van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983, p. 127).

In other words, in order to exert some control over their environment, people of all cultures have developed languages which give an identity to (name) the discrete

entities and activities they experience: other people; the things they do; states of being; attributes and values; the events they are involved in; natural phenomena; objects and the properties they possess; abstract ideas; and the perceived relationships amongst everything in their world.

This naming is, of course, a very socially and culturally specific activity and will depend on each language community's values and experience of the world. What is of significance to one group may be of little significance to another and may not even be named.

To fully comprehend an English language text therefore, the reader must recognise the propositions named within it and the relationships being posited between them. For example, if the macro-proposition is

'Change occurs in all societies and cultures'

readers must be able to identify each of the micro-propositions in the sentence, i.e., [change] [occurs] [in] [all] [societies] [and] [cultures].

In this particular text the concepts named have been grammaticalised in various ways: as a nominalisation ('change'), a verbal process ('occurs'), a relational preposition (['with]in'), an adjective ('all'), another nominalisation ['societies'), a conjunction indicating an additive relationship ('and'), another nominalisation ('cultures').

As a teacher of students for whom English is a second or foreign language, I began to realise that I would need to be more vigilant about monitoring students' understanding of both the macro and micro propositions in text. I could no longer make any assumptions about their prior knowledge.

Ideas in word segments: morphemes

Townsend Carrithers and Bever (1987: 236) found in their research into discourse comprehension across a range of American college students that unskilled readers rely more on schemata (semantic cues), and less on morphemic (grammatical) cues for thematic integration. For example, they do not perceive that word segments also carry ideas.

This was also my experience. Although students own languages use prefixes and suffixes extensively, they seemed to be unaware of the range of meaning potential they provide in English, eg., the 'dis' in 'disbelief'; the 'ed' in 'walked'; the 'ment' in announcement'.

I decided, therefore, that, as we read, it would be useful to highlight certain words and, without interrupting the flow of reading too much, draw attention to the function (and other common instances) of a range of morphemes (prefix, stem, suffix).

Ideas as expressed in metaphor

Continuing my search for links between literacy and culturally bound ideas I was struck again by the insights of Lakoff and Johnson about the ubiquity (and power) of metaphor. Collecting samples of talk from colleagues, friends and media over the years they identified many of the metaphors which shape and reflect current Western thought and which reveal our way of looking at and dealing with the world. For example, for us, at different times, ideas are products-'we are turning out new ideas'; ideas are plants-'mathematics has many branches; ideas are currency-'that idea has no value'; ideas are fashions-'that idea is old hat'.

Linguists tell us that initially the metaphorical nature of an expression is obvious. However, over time, the connection with the literal source of the metaphor is no longer perceived. The metaphor becomes 'faded' (Birrer, 1992, pers comm), 'dead' or 'frozen' (Ravelli, 1988). In fact 'much of the history of every language is a history of demetaphorising' (Halliday, 1985)

The reason we may not immediately recognise a metaphor, therefore, is because only a fragment of it now remains to alert us to its presence. For example, when I examined some of the texts students read as part of their courses I recognised from fragments metaphors which were constantly being used, e.g., 'News is one of the keys to survival in Aboriginal communities.' 'There are seven *core* units which students are required to do.' 'Magnery has just opened the first treatment centre *aimed at* detoxifying alcoholic clients.'

It seemed to me that it would be quite illuminating for students if we were to follow images like these through in a text, initially to identify the metaphor, then to set it in its historical or cultural context, then to identify the reasons for its use in this particular instance and finally to discuss its appropriateness.

Grammatical metaphor

Michael Halliday (1985) identifies a particular type of metaphor-'grammatical' metaphor-as a device commonly used in English written text and contributing usefully to the argumentative and discursive character of English because it allows a writer to pack many ideas into a highly compressed form. Again, it is all pervasive in English text.

Grammatical metaphor is the attribution of human abilities (that is, to act, to experience states of being) to a nominalisation or abstract concept, e. g., 'change *occurs*', 'change *makes people apprehensive*', 'change is *necessary*'. The devaluing of a nation's currency and the sequence of events resulting, for example, is nominalised to 'inflation'. This means we can then say things like 'We need to *combat* inflation, ie., inflation exists and it can be engaged in combat'. The state of mind 'a fear of insects' is named (nominalised). Someone can then say 'My fear of insects is *driving my wife crazy*', i.e., my fear of insects is an actual thing and it is capable of driving

someone crazy. 'The middle class *is a powerful force* for change'. That is, there exists an entity called 'the middle class' which can act like a force or natural phenomenon (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In English we are continually 'thingifying' in this way (J. Martin, 1992).

It seemed to me that when it is encountered in a text grammatical metaphor, like ordinary metaphor, needs to be unpacked with indigenous student readers. The more compressed the text the greater the need for painstaking unpacking of the ideas embedded in it. It would not be a process that could be rushed.

Cohesion: the textual 'glue' which holds the ideas together

I became aware that students would have difficulty not only in recognising many of the propositions in a text but also in identifying the *relationships* between them. Here I found Halliday's notion of 'cohesion' extremely useful-the idea that all text has 'texture' and that cohesive devices within a text form the glue which holds it together, linking or relating one strand to another and connecting all the strands to the overall fabric of the text. Grammatically, I discovered that

> 'Cohesion has to do with the manner in which a discourse relates what is being said in a current sentence to knowledge which is pre-supposed, either within the text (anaphoric or cataphoric reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction) or outside the text (exophoric reference). (Halliday, 1976)

My new awareness of the different cohesive features of an English text alerted me to the need to check with students that these connections, backwards and forwards in the text, were in fact being made. When reading, for example, I realised they tended to attribute little significance to the 'non-content' words in a text, e.g., 'as', 'to', 'since', 'although' etc, gliding quickly over them and focusing on the 'content' words. It seemed to me in retrospect that students didn't seem to know how to work out these relationships or even accept the fact that working out the relationship between the ideas was what they, as readers, were supposed to be doing.

I decided I would do this by asking questions as we read along such as, 'Who is *he*?' 'What is *this*?' 'What does *it* refer to here? What word tells us that there is a 'problem' coming up *(but, however)*? What word tells us to wait a moment in our meaning making process until we are given more information *(although)*? What other words does the writer use (substitute) throughout the text for this idea? etc. I also realised that when I was reading a text with students we might have to complete aloud the word or words which had been elided by the writer to ensure understanding.

I realised that I had to make explicit to students that reading is not simply linear. It is a strategic, meaning making process which involves roving backwards and forwards within a text to make connections as well as making connections beyond the text with 'real world' knowledge and experience as well as with other related texts.

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The reader as critical participant in the text

Indigenous students in particular need to be able to take a questioning, appraising stance on the 'reality' and 'truths' being constructed by others in text. Especially since

> ...any nomenclature whether deliberately choses or spontaneous, acts as a 'terministic screen' through which reality is selectively perceived. It screens or filters first, by its power to redirect attention into certain channels rather than others; and more deeply, by defining the range of what is possible and what is problematic. (K. Burke in Phelps, 1988)

Many of the adult indigenous students I work with do indeed bring a healthy suspicion and a willingness to critique to the reading of text, especially texts written by non-indigenous authors. However, they are usually unable to pinpoint the source of their uneasiness within the text and have little metalanguage with which to discuss it. Their criticism remains, therefore, at an incoherent and uninformed level.

While I was aware that the understandings I was developing about the potential difficulties within an English written text would greatly improve my teaching of surface level comprehension I wanted to help students move beyond comprehension to a more informed critical reading.

To do that I found the following ideas from Systemic Linguistics, Critical Literacy theorists, and Discourse Theory particularly helpful.

Text as rhetoric

Halliday's social, functional approach to grammar usefully emphasises that all writers and speakers use language rhetorically, that is in particular ways for particular purposes. Essentially, from a rhetorical view of text, each writer or speaker is in the business of persuading others to a point of view. Therefore no writer is neutral, each is partisan. I realised I would need to constantly remind students as we read that another human being, with a particular history had constructed the text. To reinforce this notion I would have to provide them with as much background as possible to any text we were dealing with. Who wrote this text? In what context? Who is this person? What is his/her authority for writing about the topic? How current is the information or thinking in this text? What is the purpose of the text? Who is expected to read this text? What is the point of view they are being persuaded to?

However, in order to persuade, a writer must choose his/her language with care. I could see that students would need to be encouraged to discuss the writer's choice of language quite specifically, 'Why this word not that?' and to see how careful analysis of these choices can alert us as discerning readers to the writer's purposes and own position on the topic under discussion.

Text as a construction of reality:

Critical Literacy theorists argue that writers do not merely describe reality or try to persuade their reader to their point of view, in the act of writing they construct a particular reality of their own. Critical literacy proponents argue that it is in the reader's interest to deconstruct this reality and to ask 'Whose interests does it best serve?'.

I decided to test this hypothesis myself and examined the following short text:

> Eric Poole, the Territory's Minister for the Liquor Commission, says that $200 million every year has to be spent on health, welfare, law enforcement and correctional services because of alcohol abuse. According to him Aboriginal people, who form 23% of the population, cost more than their share. (Bulletin, May 17, 1994.)

So what is the reality being constructed here? Eric Poole, given his official title, 'Minister for the Liquor Commission', is quickly constructed by the journalist/writer as an authority with official imprimatur to speak on behalf of the government of the Northern Territory. The journalist, by prefacing his information with 'says that' and 'according to him' attempts to position himself as merely an unbiased reporter doing his job.

The minister, in turn, through his particular selection of language and the message he wishes to convey, constructs Aboriginal people (and presumably this is the official government view) as a problem-'alcohol *abuse*', 'cost more than their share'. Aboriginal Territorians are constructed as draining the resources of the Northern Territory at the expense of other Territorians. The central problem and cause of the current crisis is constructed as their misuse of alcohol. Because of this misuse of alcohol, they make themselves sick (requiring medical treatment), they are unable or unwilling to work (requiring payment of benefits), they live in disfunctional families (requiring the help of social workers) and they break the law and take up space in the prisons (requiring incarceration).

Both the Minister and Aboriginal people are highly visible in this text. However, there are many other, invisible players concealed within nominalisations such as 'health', 'welfare', 'law enforcement' and 'correctional services'. Hundreds and even thousands of Territorians, mostly non-Aboriginal people, who work in these areas benefit indirectly from the sickness, alcoholism and incarceration of Aboriginal people: medical practitioners; social workers; prison officers; and administrators. Moreover, the need for these support services necessitates the development of a substantial infrastructure-government departments, housing, schools-all of which contribute to the growth and stability of the Northern Territory as a viable entity. So how have these 'costs' of $200 million a year been calculated?

The primary cause of this whole situation is constructed as Aboriginal people's current abuse of alcohol. In this, the minister (and therefore the NT Government)

constructs himself as primarily political and short term in his orientation rather than historical. Otherwise how far back in history might he have gone in his search for a cause?

Approaching text as a construction of reality certainly seemed to me yet another approach I might usefully incorporate when working with indigenous students. Once one is more fully aware of how constructions are being made, they can be challenged.

Text as Discourse

The final theory, the Theory of Discourse, provided me with yet another perspective from which to reveal the constructedness of text with students. Viewing language as Discourse[1] is informed by the writings of Michel Foucault. According to Foucault (in Kress, 1985) Discourses are 'systematically-organised modes of talking or writing' which arise out of social and cultural institutions, transactions and events. These function like ongoing Conversations criss crossing societies.

These Conversations are instantiated in text by fragments of language. A text can bear the traces of many of these Conversations or Discourses-fragments which recall current debates or allude to past events and attitudes, to history and culture. By discerning these fragments in a text a reader can detect which Conversations the writer is reactivating, which interest groups a writer or speaker is appealing to or identifying with.

Using the idea of the presence of Discourses I considered the same text as before:

> Eric Poole, the Territory's Minister for the Liquor Commission, says that $200 million every year has to be spent on health, welfare, law enforcement and correctional services because of alcohol abuse. According to him Aboriginal people, who form 23% of the population, cost more than their share. (Bulletin, May 17, 1994.)

In this text we can detect the traces of several Discourses, for example, the Discourse of *Reportage/Journalism:* 'Eric Poole says...', 'According to him...'; the Discourse of *Bureaucracy:* 'The Territory's Minister for the Liquor Commission', 'health, welfare, law enforcement and correctional services'; the Discourse of *Complaint:* '$200 million *has* to be spent'; the Discourse of *Blame:* 'because of alcohol *abuse*'; the Discourse of *Statistics:* 'who form 23% of the population'; the Discourse of *Equity and Justice:* 'cost more than their share'.

The Discourse sensitive Northern Territory reader would also detect some NT Discourses of long standing, unvoiced in the text perhaps, but 'present' by association:

[1] A capital D is used here (after Gee, 1993) to distinguish this concept of Discourse from the more common linguistic usage of the term 'discourse'.

the Discourse of *Longsuffering Benevolence to Aboriginal Territorians;* the Discourse of *Justification for more Funding from the Federal Government;* the Discourse of *The Aboriginal Industry*, i.e., the considerable number of non-Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory paid to work in a range of Aboriginal related areas of employment[2]; the Discourse of *Anomie (Boredom, Despair, Alienation, Frustration);* the Discourses of *Grief, Dispossession* and *Enforced Dependency.*

It now seems to me that being encouraged to detect Discourse within a text could be helpful for indigenous students, however identifying western Discourses will demand a degree of linguistic subtlety, cultural and political awareness and historical knowledge which will take time to develop.

A brief overview of the search so far

My search for some answers to ways of supporting students and educators in teaching English literacy had led me to a multiplicity of possible perspectives which could be adopted when approaching a text: viewing the text: as a map; as ideas; as imagery (metaphor); as texture; as language choice; as construction of reality; and as the site of competing Discourses. I have since found that it is possible to integrate all of the above, or as many as are appropriate depending on the opportunities provided by the text, during shared reading with students.

Implications for reading with students

I believe there are many benefits to be gained from this practice:

- Taken together, these different ways into a text can provide a much deeper and more informed reading
- Text analysis like this can be practised within existing programs, using relevant texts of interest to students.
- By considering texts from their chosen field of study in this way, by examining closely its typical terminology, imagery, ways of operating, key concepts and underpinning theories, students will eventually be able to critique/challenge and even shift mainstream Discourses

[2]This group, usually alluded to pejoratively, includes lawyers who act on behalf of Aboriginal people, public servants employed to work in the area of Aboriginal education, social workers who advocate on behalf of Aboriginal people etc. It does not generally include, for example, the medical profession or prison staff since they are seen as either engaged in compassionate work or merely doing their job and not in any way benefiting personally from their association with Aboriginal people.

- Students will gradually develop a metalanguage for discussing what is going on in a text, e. g., 'title', 'author', 'paragraph', 'conclusion', 'quotation', 'punctuation', 'the sentence before that', 'after the comma', 'image', 'idea', 'concept', 'description', 'argument', etc.
- This ability to discuss textual issues will increase individual students' ability to discuss their own writing.
- Using metalanguage to discuss the way a text works involves students in a level of abstraction important for academic study and therefore for their continued professional development.
- Shared reading as a strategy positions teacher and students as co-participants in exploration.
- Shared reading builds upon indigenous students' preference for collaborative, rather than independent effort.
- Shared reading creates an opportunity to a) informally assess each student's level of textual understanding and b) teach (incidentally) specific characteristics of English and how the language works, especially in its written form.
- Once the process becomes familiar, students have a strategy they can use independently.

It means taking students on an overview of the text-discussing its origins and purpose, its genre, its authorship, its anticipated readership, its publication date etc., scanning the headings, illustrations, references to build up more background knowledge and encourage prediction.

It means reading the text in advance myself, marking and annotating my own copy extensively with points to be highlighted and discussed as the reading proceeds, points which illustrate as many of the above features as appropriate.

Initially it means ensuring comprehension of the text at a surface level and continually focusing students attention on the actual words of the text. It means reading round the group, paragraph by paragraph supporting each other when necessary. Then opening each paragraph up sentence by sentence, establishing the necessary orientation, establishing understanding of relationships and connections, establishing understandings of key concepts/propositions, highlighting imagery (metaphor). Without unduly disturbing the flow of the activity, this is also an opportunity for incidental teaching of prefixes/suffixes, homonyms and antonyms, word origins, word families, spelling etc.

Ultimately it means, once the text is generally 'understood', reflecting on what is beneath the surface: commenting on the writer's choice of word, phrase or image; challenging or confirming the writer's construction of reality; identifying the Discourses competing in the text, both voiced and unvoiced; encouraging students to make connections between the ideas in the text and their own life and work experiences; and allowing time to discuss and challenge these.

Conclusion

This kind of reading takes time. It might seem much 'quicker' and 'simpler' to the hard pressed course deliverer to issue prescribed texts to students and assume they have read and understood them. However, I believe that taking the time to share the indepth reading of a few key texts should be regarded as an investment in the future. With each revisiting of the process students grasp more and more what is expected of them as readers. Many issues which have to be discussed as part of the course of study will be encountered and discussed more appropriately as they arise during the shared reading of field related texts. Moreover, students will benefit from hearing of the experiences of others and be assisted to clarify their own position on an issue by being exposed during shared reading and discussion to the differing positions of others in the group in relation to the text and the ideas in it.

I would like to conclude with a quote from Paulo Freire,

> Serious reading is part of the rigor (sic) of the dialogical class ...studying really, reading seriously, critically.
>
> ...instead of telling the students, you have to read the first chapter of this book by Hegel or this book by Gramsci I read one chapter with them in the whole time of the seminar. I read with them, without telling them I am teaching them how to read, what it means to read critically, what demands you make on yourself to read, that it's impossible to go to the next page without understanding the page you are on, that if you don't understand some words you have to go to a dictionary. If a normal dictionary does not help you, you have to go to a philosophical dictionary, a sociological dictionary, an etymological dictionary! reading a book is a kind of permanent research. I do that with students. (Shor & Freire, 1987).

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Double Power is a collection of articles about literacy, English and Indigenous Australians, both the practical and political aspects.

The title of this book, *Double Power*, comes from the words of Mandawuy Yunupingu in describing his personal experience of becoming a person who is literate across two cultures. Mandawuy Yunupingu argues persuasively that being literate in English has added to the resources he has at his disposal in negotiating with the dominant culture. Martin Nakata presents an impassioned case for English literacy in schools in the Torres Strait Islands.

The book also includes case studies from a number of contexts. These contexts vary in both their circumstances and their locations. They include adult workplace literacy (Western Australia), literacy for adults in tertiary education (Northern Territory) and primary and secondary schooling (Arnhem Land and Central Australia). All of these articles are written by practitioners with experience in the field and all of them document actual practice.

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